PRICE SIXPENCE

ARRAH NEIL

BY G.P.R. JAMES

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS, LONDON, GLASGOW, & NEW YORK

'THE STOMACH GOVERNS THE WORLD'

GENERAL GORDON.

DEPARTED ERRORS.—"Our past becomes the mightiest Teacher to our FUTURE; looking back over the Tombs of DEPARTED ERRORS, we behold by the side of each the face of a WARNING ANGEL."

LORD LYTTON.

"COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE."

AFTER A DAY'S PLEASURE

USE

ENO'S "FRUIT SALT"

AND

ENO'S "VEGETABLE MOTO."

"Men laugh and riot till the feast is o'er,
Then comes the reckoning, and they laugh no more."

"Moderation is the silken string running through the pearl chain of all virtues."

BISHOP HALL.

DRAWING AN OVERDRAFT ON THE BANK OF LIFE.—Late hours, fagged, unnatural excitement, breathing impure air, too rich food, alcoholic drink, gouty, rheumatic, and other blood poisons, feverish cold, biliousness, sick headache, skin eruptions, pimples on the face, want of appetite, sourness of the stomach, &c.—Use ENO'S "FRUIT SALT" (and ENO'S "VEGETABLE MOTO" as occasion may require). They are everything you could wish as a simple and natural health-giving agent. You cannot overstate their great value in keeping the blood pure and free from disease.

HOW TO AVOID THE INJURIOUS EFFECTS OF STIMULANTS.

THE present system of living—partaking of too rich foods, as pastry, saccharine and fatty substances, alcoholic drinks, and an insufficient amount of exercise—frequently deranges the liver. I would advise all bilious people, unless they are careful to keep the liver acting freely, to exercise great care in the use of alcoholic drinks, avoid sugar, and always dilute largely with water. Experience shows that porter, mild ales, port wine, dark sherries, sweet champagne, liqueurs, and brandies are all very apt to disagree; while light white wines, and gin or whisky largely diluted with soda-water, will be found the least objectionable. ENO'S "FRUIT SALT" and ENO'S "VEGETABLE MOTO" are peculiarly adapted for any constitutional weakness of the liver; they possess the power of reparation when digestion has been disturbed or lost, and place the invalid on the right track to health. A world of woes is avoided by those who keep and use ENO'S "FRUIT SALT" and ENO'S "VEGETABLE MOTO": therefore no family should ever be without them.

ENO'S "FRUIT SALT" *versus* BRANDY.

"THERE were a few attacks of mild dysentery, brought mainly on by ill-considered devotion to brandy, or biliousness produced by the same cause. For the latter we used to swear by ENO'S 'FRUIT SALT,' which is simply invaluable."—*See* "CORAL LANDS," Vol. I.

HEADACHE, DISORDERED STOMACH, and NERVOUS DISEASES,

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WEST INDIES.—To. Mr. J. C. Eno, London.—"Please send me a further supply of your 'VEGETABLE MOTO' to the value of the P.O. Order enclosed (eight shillings). The first small parcel received came up fully to what is written of them.—St. Kitts, West Indies, 11th Oct., 1887."

Caution.—*Examine each Bottle, and see the Capsule is marked "ENO'S." Without it, you have been imposed on by a worthless imitation. Sold by all Chemists. Directions in Sixteen Languages How to Prevent Disease.*

PREPARED ONLY AT ENO'S "FRUIT SALT" WORKS, POMEROY ST., NEW CROSS ROAD, LONDON, S.E.

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ARRAH NEIL

OR

TIMES OF OLD

BY

G. P. R. JAMES

AUTHOR OF "RICHELIEU," "DARNLEY," ETC.

AUTHOR'S COPYRIGHT EDITION

LONDON

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS

BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL

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1887

G. P. R. JAMES'S NOVELS.

THE BRIGAND
MORLEY ERNSTEIN
DARNLEY
RICHELIEU
THE GIPSY
ARABELLA STUART
THE WOODMAN
AGINCOURT
RUSSELL
THE KING'S HIGHWAY
THE CASTLE OF EHRENSTEIN
THE STEPMOTHER
FOREST DAYS
THE HUGUENOT
THE MAN AT ARMS
A WHIM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES
HENRY MASTERTON
THE CONVICT
MARY OF BURGUNDY
GOWRIE
DELAWARE
HENRY OF GUISE
THE ROBBER
ONE IN A THOUSAND
THE SMUGGLER
DE L'ORME
HEIDELBERG
THE FALSE HEIR
CASTELNEAU
THE FORGERY
THE GENTLEMAN OF THE OLD SCHOOL
PHILIP AUGUSTUS
THE BLACK EAGLE
THE OLD DOMINION
BEAUCHAMP
ARRAH NEIL
MY AUNT PONTYPOOL

ARRAH NEIL.

CHAPTER I.

About two centuries ago, in times with which we are all familiar, as they comprised a period of English history, the events of which have affected the social condition of the British people more than almost any which have preceded or followed that period—about two centuries ago, there stood upon the slope of a gentle hill, in a picturesque part of England, an old brick mansion of considerable extent, and of a venerable though flourishing exterior. On the right hand and on the left there was a wood of various trees, amidst which Evelyn might have delighted to roam, choice children of the British forest, mingled with many a stranger grown familiar with the land, though not long denizened in it. In front was a terrace flanked with quaintly-carved flower-pots of stone; and beyond that stretched a lawn several roods in extent, leaving the mansion fully exposed to the eye of every one who wandered through the valley below. Beyond the lawn again a wide view was obtained over a pleasant scene of hill and dale, with the top of a village church and its high tower peeping over the edge of the first earth-wave; and far off, faint and grey, were seen the lines of a distant city, apparently of considerable extent. The house itself had nothing very remarkable in its appearance, and yet circumstances compel us to give some account of it, although it is but building up to pull down, as the reader will soon perceive. The middle part consisted of a large square mass of brickwork, rising somewhat higher, and projecting somewhat farther, than the rest of the building. It had in the centre a large hall-door, with a flight of stone steps, and on each side of the entrance were three windows in chiselled frames of stone. On either side of this centre was a wing flanked with a small square tower, and in each wing and each tower was a small door opening upon the terrace. Manifold lattices, too, with narrow panes set in lead, ornamented these inferior parts of the building in long straight rows, and chimneys nearly as numerous towered up from the tall peaked roofs, not quite in keeping with the trim regularity of the other parts of the edifice. The whole, however, had a pleasant and yet imposing effect when seen from a distance; and to any one who looked near there was an air of comfort and cheerfulness about the mansion which well compensated for the want of grace. The view, too, from the terrace and the windows was in itself a continual source of calm and high-toned pleasure to the minds that dwelt within, for they were those that could appreciate all that is lovely, more especially in the works of God; and over the wide scene came a thousand varying aspects, as the clouds and sunshine chased each other along, like the poetical dreams of a bright and varying imagination. Morning and sunset, too, and moonlight and mid-day, each wrought a change in the prospect, and brought out something new and fair on which the eye rested with delight.

It was evening: the lower limb of the large round sun rested on a dark line of trees which filled up one of the slopes of the ground about six miles off; and above the bright and glowing disc, which seemed to float in a sea of its own glory, were stretched a few small dark clouds, edged with gold, which hung over the descending star like a veil thrown back to afford one last look of the bright orb of day before the reign of night began. Higher still, the sky was blushing like a bride; and woods and fields, and distant spires and hills, all seemed penetrated with the purple splendour of the hour. Nothing could be fairer or more peaceful than the whole scene, and it was scarcely possible to suppose that the violent passions of man could remain untamed and unchastened by the aspect of so much bright tranquillity.

Winding along at the foot of the hill, and marking the commencement of what might be called the plain,—though, to say the truth, the wide space to which we must give that name was broken by innumerable undulations,—appeared a hard but sandy road, from which a carriage-way led by a circuit up to the mansion. In some places high banks, covered with shrubs and bushes, overhung the course of the road, though in others it passed unsheltered over the soft, short grass of the hill; but just at the angle where the two paths separated, the

ground rose almost to a cliff, and at the bottom was a spring of very clear water gathered into a little stone basin.

By the side of the fountain, at the time we speak of, sat a figure which harmonized well with the landscape. It was that of a young girl, not yet apparently sixteen years of age. Her garb appeared to be that of poverty, her head uncovered by anything but rich and waving locks of warm brown hair, her face and neck tanned with the sun, her feet bare, as well as her hands and her arms above the elbows, and her apparel scanty, and in some places torn, though scrupulously clean. She seemed, in short, a beggar, and many a one would have passed her by as such without notice; but those who looked nearer saw that her features were very beautiful, her teeth of a dazzling whiteness, her limbs rounded and well formed, and her blue eyes under their long jetty eyelashes as bright, yet soft, as ever beamed on mortal man. Yet there was something wanting in her face, an indefinable something, not exactly intellect, for there was often a keen and flashing light spread over the whole countenance. Neither was it expression, for of that there was a great deal. Neither was it steadiness, for there frequently came a look of deep thought, painfully deep, intense, abstracted, unsatisfied, as if the mind sought something within itself that it could not discover. What it was it is difficult, nay, impossible to say; yet there was something wanting, and all those who looked upon her felt that it was so.

She sat by that little fountain for a long time, sometimes gazing into the water as if her heart were at the bottom of the brook; sometimes, suddenly looking up, with her head bent on one side, and her ear inclined, listening to the notes of a lark that rose high in air from the neighbouring fields, and trilled the joy-inspired hymn under the glowing sky; and as she did so, a smile, sweet, and bland, and happy, came upon her lip, as if to her the song of the lark spoke hope and comfort from a higher source than any of the earth.

While she was thus sitting, more than one horseman passed along the road; but the poor girl gave them only a casual glance, and then resumed her meditations. One or two villagers, too, on foot, walked on their way, some of them giving her a nod, to which she answered nothing. A thin and gloomy-looking personage, too, with a tall hat and black coat and doublet, rode down from the mansion, followed by two men of somewhat less staid and abstinent appearance; and as he passed by he first gazed on her with not the most holy smile, but the moment after gave her a sour look, and muttered something about the stocks. The girl paid him no attention, however.

At length a horse trotting briskly was heard coming along the high road; and a moment after, a gay cavalier, well mounted and armed, with feather in his hat and gold upon his doublet, long curling locks hanging on his shoulders, and heavy gilt spurs buckled over his boots, appeared at the angle of the bank. There he pulled up, however, as if doubtful which path to take, and, seeing the girl, he exclaimed in a loud but not unkindly tone, "Which is the way to Bishop's Merton, sweetheart?"

The girl rose and dropped him a graceful curtsey, but for her only reply she smiled.

"Which is the way to Bishop's Merton, pretty maid?" the stranger repeated, bringing his horse closer to her.

"The village is out there," replied the girl, pointing with her hand along the road; "the house is up there," she added, turning towards the mansion on the hill; and then she immediately seated herself again with a deep sigh, and began once more to gaze into the fountain.

The stranger wheeled his horse as if to ride up to the house, but then paused, and, springing to the ground, he turned to the girl once more, asking, "What is the matter with you, my poor girl? Has any one injured you? Is there anything ails you? What makes you so sad?"

She looked in his face for a moment with a countenance totally void of expression, and then, gazing down into the water again, she resumed her meditations without making any reply.

"She must be a fool," the stranger said, speaking to himself. "All the better for her, poor girl; I wish I were a fool too. One would escape half the sorrows of this life if he did not understand them, and half the sins too, if he did not know what he were about. What a happy thing it must be to be a rich fool! but she is a poor one, that is clear, and the case is not so fortunate. Here, sweetheart, there's a crown for thee. Good faith! I am likely ere long to thank any man for one myself, so it matters not how soon the few I have are gone."

The girl took the money readily, and dropped the giver a low curtsey, saying, "Thank your worship; God bless you, sir!"

"He had need, my pretty maid," replied the stranger, "for never man wanted a blessing more than I do, or has been longer without one." And thus speaking, he sprang upon his horse's back again, and rode up towards the house.

When he was gone, she to whom he had spoken continued standing where he had left her, meditating sadly, as it seemed, for several minutes; and at length she said in a low tone, "Alas! he does not come—he does not come. Perhaps he will never come again—oh, how I wish he would stay away!"

The whole speech was as contradictory as a speech could be, especially when the look and manner were taken as part and parcel thereof. But there was nothing extraordinary in the fact; for man is a mass of contradictions, and there is scarce one enjoyment that does not partake of pain, one apprehension that is not mingled with a hope, one hope that is not chequered by a fear. Antagonistic principles are ever warring

within us, and many of the greatest contests result in a drawn battle. If, however, the girl's first words and the last had been evidently in opposition to each other, the wish with which she concluded was instantly belied by the glow upon her cheek and the light in her eye when she once more heard the sound of a horse's feet coming from the direction of the little town of Bishop's Merton.

"It is he!" she cried, with a smile,—"it is he! I know the pace, I know the pace!" and, running into the middle of the road, she gazed down it, while a horseman, followed by three servants, came on at a rapid rate, with a loose rein and an easy seat. He was a young man of seven or eight-and-twenty, with long fair hair and pointed beard, tall and well-made, though somewhat slight in form, with a grave and even stern cast of features, but a broad, high forehead, clear but well-marked brows, and lips full but not large. His face, as I have said, was grave, and seemed as he rode forward unsusceptible of any but a cold, thoughtful expression, till suddenly his eyes lighted on the poor girl who was watching him, when a bright and beaming smile broke over his whole countenance, and a complete change took place, like that which spreads over a fine country when the storm gives place to sunshine.

"Ah, Arrah Neil!" he cried; "my poor Arrah Neil, is that you come back? Where is your grandfather, poor child? have they set him free?" And he too sprang from his horse, taking the girl's hand with a look of tender compassion.

"No, he is not free," replied Arrah Neil; "he never will be free."

"Oh yes," answered the gentleman; "these things cannot last for ever, Arrah. Time will bring about changes, I doubt not, which will deliver him from whatever prison they have taken him to."

"Not from that prison," answered the girl, with tears rising in her eyes; "it is a low and narrow prison, Lord Walton. I told them he would die when they took him, and he only reached Devizes. But they are happy who sleep—they are happy who sleep;" and, sitting down by the side of the well, she fell into thought again.

The stranger stood and gazed at her for a moment without uttering a word. There are times when silence is more eloquent of sympathy than the choicest words of condolence. One of the servants, however, who had ridden up, and was holding his lord's horse, burst forth with an oath, "The Roundhead rascals! I wish I had my sword in their stomachs! The good old man was worth a score of them."

"Hush!" said his master sternly,—"hush! no such words in my hearing, Langan!"

"Then, faith, my lord, I must speak them behind your back," murmured the man; but his master had taken a step forward, and was bending down his head to speak to the poor girl.

"Come up to the house, Arrah," he said; "you must not stay here alone, nor go back to the cottage either. Come up to the house, and my sister will comfort and be kind to you."

The girl gazed in his face for a moment, and then, suddenly starting up as if some remembrance flashed across her mind, she exclaimed, "No, no! do not go home, sir! Do not go there. Misfortune will happen to you if you go there—I am sure it will—I am quite sure it will."

"But why, Arrah?" asked her companion, with an incredulous smile; "what makes you think that there is any danger? Have you seen any of the Parliament people there?"

"There was Dry of Longsoaken," replied Arrah Neil; "but he came down again, and it is not that. But I must not say what it is. Yet do not go up—do not go up! kind, good Charles Walton, do not go up!"

The young nobleman looked at her with an expression of much commiseration for her sorrows, but no reliance on her words. "I must go, Arrah," he said; "you know my sister is there; and even if there be danger I must go. Come up, Arrah, there's a good girl, and we will do the best we can for you in these sad times."

The poor girl shook her head sadly, and, after a moment's pause, replied, "Ah, you think me a fool! and so I am, perhaps, for things trouble me much here," and she laid her finger on her brow; "memories—memories that haunt me, but are like dreams that we try to recall distinctly after sleep is gone, and yet have but faint images of them, as of trees in a mist. But I am not a fool in this, sir; and I beseech you not to go."

"Stay with her, Langan," said Lord Walton, "and bring her up to the house. The fit is upon the poor girl, and her grandfather's death may make it worse. You loved him well, and will be kind to her. Stay with her, good fellow, and persuade her to come up. I must go now, Arrah," he continued; "but come up with Langan, for Annie will be glad to see you again, and will try to comfort you."

Thus saying, he remounted his horse and rode onward up the hill.

CHAPTER II.

In the well-sanded parlour of a small but neat inn, called the "Rose of Sharon," on the evening of the same day whereof we have just been speaking, and in the village, or town as perhaps we should call it, of Bishop's Merton,—for it was beginning to give itself the airs of a great place,—sat two personages finishing their supper about half-past nine o'clock. Their food was a cold sirloin of roast beef,—for the English nation were always fond of that plain and substantial commodity,—and their drink was good English ale, the most harmonious accompaniment to the meat. The elder of the two was a hard-featured,

somewhat morose-looking personage, but of a hale, fresh complexion, with a quick, grey eye. There was a great deal of thought upon the brow, and round the mouth were some strongly-defined lines, we might almost call them furrows. He was as thin and spare, too, as a pair of tongs, but apparently strong and active for his age; and his long limbs and breadth of chest spoke considerable original powers. He was dressed altogether in black; and though a tall steeple-crowned hat lay on a chair by his side, he wore while sitting at meat a small round cap of dark cloth, in the shape of a half pumpkin, on the top of his head. He had also a good strong sword leaning on the chair beside him, habited like himself in black, with steel points and hilt.

The other was a younger man, very different in appearance; a good deal taller than his companion, and apparently more vigorous; his face decorated with an immense pair of moustaches and a somewhat pointed beard, both of that indistinct hue which may be called whey-colour. His hair floated upon his shoulders in the style of the Cavaliers; but, to say the truth, it seemed somewhat unconscious of the comb; and his dress, too, displayed that sort of dirty finery which by no means prepossesses the wary usurer or experienced tradesman with the idea of great funds at command on the part of the wearer. His doublet of soiled leather displayed a great number of ornamented buttons and shreds of gold lace; his collar and hand-ruffles were of lace which had once been of high price, but had seen service probably with more masters than one, and had borne away in the conflict with the world many a hole and tear, more honourable in flag or standard than in human apparel. Hanging by his side, and ready for action, was an egregious rapier, with a small dagger placed beside it, as if to set off its length to greater advantage. On his legs were a large pair of jack-boots, which he seldom laid aside, and there is even reason to suppose that they covered several deficiencies; and hanging on a peg behind was a broad beaver, very unlike the hats worn in England at the time, ornamented with a long red feather.

As to his countenance and its expression, both were very peculiar. The features in themselves were not bad,—the eyes large and somewhat prominent. The nose, which was so pre-eminent as to form the chief object in the expanse of his countenance, whichever way his face was turned, was not altogether ill-shaped, and might have passed muster amongst the ordinary noses of the world, had it not been that it was set in the midst of a patch of red, which seemed to have transferred itself from the cheeks to unite in the centre of the face. The expression was bold, swaggering, and impudent; but a touch of shrewd cunning was there, diversified every now and then by a quick, furtive look around, which seemed to show that the worthy gentleman himself, like a careful sentinel, was always upon the watch.

Certainly, seldom were there ever seen companions more opposite than were there seated at supper on the present occasion; and yet it not unfrequently happens, in this strange life of ours, that circumstances, inclination, or wayward fortune, makes our comrade of the way the man of all others least like one's self; and of all the great general principles which are subject to exceptions, that which has the most is the fact of birds of a feather flocking together.

"I have done," said the elder of the two, laying down his knife.

"Pooh, nonsense!" cried the other; "you haven't eaten half a pound. I shan't have done this half-hour. I am like a camel, Master Randal. Whenever I have an opportunity, I lay in a store in my own stomach for the journey."

"Or like an ass," replied the other gentleman, "who takes more upon his back than he can carry."

"No, not like an ass either," replied the man with the great moustaches, "for an ass bears the food for other people—I for myself. How can you or I tell whether we shall get another meal for the next three days? 'Tis always right to prepare for the worst; and therefore, so long as my stomach will hold and the beef endure, I will go on."

"The man who never knows when he has enough," answered his companion, "is sure, sooner or later, either to want or have too much, and one is as bad as the other."

"Oh, your pardon, your pardon!" cried the tall man; "give me the too much. I will always find means to dispose of it—I am of the *too much faction*. It's my battle-cry, my rallying word. Give me the too much by all means. Did you ever see a carpenter cut out a door? Did you ever see a tailor cut out a coat? Did you ever see a blacksmith forge a horseshoe? They always take too much to begin with. There are plenty of bags in the world always wide open for superfluities; but, to say truth, I never found I had too much yet: that's an epoch in my history which is to come."

"Because, like other fools, you never know when you have enough," replied the man called Randal; "and as for your future history, it will form but a short tale, easily told."

"I know what you would say, I know what you would say," replied the other: "that the last act will find me the most elevated situation I have ever filled, though I may still be a dependant. But I can tell you, my good friend, that in my many dangerous expeditions and important occupations I have escaped the cross piece of timber and the line perpendicular so often, that I fear I am reserved for another fate, and am in great dread every time I go upon the water."

"You are quite safe," replied the other, with a grim smile: "I'll wager a thousand pounds upon your life, in a worm-eaten boat with a hole in the bottom. But hemp, hemp! I would have you beware of hemp! 'Oddslife! to hear you talk of your dangerous expeditions and important occupations— Cease, cease! I would sleep in peace to-night, and you will give me an indigestion."

"Pshaw!" cried the other; "you have no

more stomach than a pipped hen; and as to my exploits, what land have I not visited? what scenes have I not seen? To whom, if not to me, was owing the defence of Rochelle? To whom—"

"Hush, hush!" said his companion; "tell the tale to others. I would as soon drink vinegar, or eat stale cabbage, as hear lies four times repeated, even with a variation."

"Lies!" cried the other; "thunder and lightning, sir—"

"There, there," cried his companion, quietly waving his hand: "that will do; no more of it. Thunder and lightning will do nothing at your bidding; so the less you have to do with them the better, lest you burn your fingers. Try to be an honest man, leave off lying; don't swagger but when you are drunk; and perchance you may be permitted to hold the horses while other men fight."

"Well, there is no use in quarrelling with a maggot," replied his tall comrade; and, taking to his knife again, he commenced a new inroad on the beef, in assailing which, at least, he kept his word with a laudable degree of fidelity.

In the meanwhile, the gentleman in black turned his shoulder to the table, and fell into deep thought. But after a moment or two he opened his lips, with an oracular shake of the head, not exactly addressing his speech to his companion, but more apparently to the hilt of his own sword, the point of which he had brought round between his feet, and the blade of which he twirled round and round with his hands while he was speaking.

"Nine out of ten of them," he said, "are either rank fools or cold-hearted knaves, presumptuous blockheads, who think they have a right to command, because they have not wit enough to obey; or cunning scoundrels who aim alone at their own interests, when they are affecting to serve only their country, and yet are fools enough not to see that the good of the whole is the good of every part."

"Who, who, who? Whom do you mean?" answered the other.

"English gentlemen," replied the man in black; "English gentlemen, I say."

"Complimentary, certainly," remarked his comrade; "and by no means too general or comprehensive. I daresay it's very true, though. So here's to your health, Master Randal."

"Let my health alone," said Randal, "and take care of your own; for if you drink much more of that old ale, your head to-morrow morning will be as heavy as the barrel from which it comes, and I shall have to pump upon you to make you fit for any business whatsoever. Come, finish your supper, and take a walk with me upon the hill. But whom have we here? One of the rebels, I take it. Now, mind your part, but do not lie more than your nature absolutely requires."

The last words of this speech were, as may be supposed, spoken in a low voice, an addition having been suddenly made to the party in the room where they were sitting.

The personage who entered was the same thin, self-denying-looking gentleman who had passed poor Arrah Neil, as she sat by the fountain in the morning, and had in his own mind charitably furnished her with a lodging in the stocks. That we may not have to return in order to relate this gentleman's previous history hereafter, we may as well pause here for a moment to say the few words that are needed on the subject, especially as some reference may be made to his former life in another place.

Master Dry of Longsoaken, as he was now called, had risen from an humble origin, and, though now a wealthy man, had commenced his career as the errand-boy of a grocer, or rather general dealer, in the village of Bishop's Merton. His master was a rigid man, a Puritan of the most severe cast, and his master's wife a buxom dame, given somewhat to the good things of life, especially of a fluid kind, which she employed the ingenuity of young Ezekiel Dry in obtaining for her, unknown to her more abstemious better half. He thus acquired some skill in deceiving sharp eyes; and it was whispered that his worthy patron did not fail to give him further improvement in this peculiar branch of science by initiating him into the mystery of the difference between a yard measure and a yard of tape or ribbon, between a pound weight and a pound of sugar or butter; between which, as the learned reader is aware, there is a great and important distinction.

As worthy Ezekiel Dry grew up into a young man, his master settled down into an old one; and at length Death, who, like his neighbours in a country town, is compelled occasionally to go to the chandler's shop, called one morning at the door of Ezekiel's master, and would not be satisfied without his full measure.

The usual course of events then took place. There was a widow and a shopman; the widow was middle-aged and wealthy, the shopman young and poor; and Mr. Dry became a married man, and master of the shop. During a probation of twenty years, which his state of matrimony lasted, he did not altogether escape scandal; but in those times, as in others, very rigid piety (at least in appearance) was not always accompanied by very rigid morality; and those people who conceived that they might exist separately looked upon the latter as of very little consequence where the former was pre-eminent.

At length, after having resisted time and strong waters (which her second husband never denied her in any quantity) to the age of nearly seventy, Mrs. Dry slept with her ancestors; and Mr. Dry went on flourishing, till at length he sold his house and shop to another pillar of the conventicle, and bought a good estate in the near neighbourhood, called Longsoaken. He still kept up his connection with his native town, however, became a person of the highest consideration therein, took part in all its councils, managed many of its affairs, was acquainted with all its news, and was the stay of the Puritans, the terror of the parson, and the scorn of the Cavaliers.

It was his usual custom, as he still remained a widower, to look into the "Rose of Sharon" every fine afternoon—less, as he said, to take even the needful refreshment of the body than to pause and meditate for half an hour before he retired to his own house; but it was remarked that, on these occasions, he invariably had a small measure of some kind of liquid put down beside him, and consulted the host upon the affairs of everybody in the place.

In the present instance, Mr. Dry had received immediate information that two strangers had appeared at the "Rose of Sharon" between eight and nine, and he had hastened up from Longsoaken without loss of time; but he had spent nearly half-an-hour with the landlord in an inner chamber, inquiring into all the particulars of their appearance and demeanour. Now, the landlord had lost more than one good customer in consequence of the unpleasant interference of his respected neighbour, who had occasionally caused some of the most expensive visitors at his house to be committed as "malignants;" but as he dared not show any resistance or make any remonstrance to a person so high in authority as Master Dry of Longsoaken, his only course was to defend the characters of his guests as far as was safe. But the worthy host was a timid man, and never ventured to pronounce a decided opinion in the presence of his betters.

In answer, therefore, to the questions now addressed to him, he replied, "Oh dear no, worshipful sir! That is to say,—for one cannot be certain of anything in this ungodly world,—they do not look like it at all. Malignants are always gay in their apparel, and the gentleman is dressed just like yourself, all in black. He has got a Geneva skull-cap, too; I should not wonder if he were a gifted man like yourself."

"That may be a mere disguise," said Mr. Dry.

"Then, malignants are always roystering blades," continued the landlord; "calling for all manner of things, beginning with wine and ending with strong waters. Now, these good people have nought but beef and ale; though, doubtless, as all godly men may do for the comfort of the inner man, they will take something more warming before they go; but, as yet, one tankard of ale is all they have had."

"That looks well," said Mr. Dry oracularly; "not that I would condemn any man for using creature comforts in moderation, according to his necessity. Some men's complexion, if of a cold and melancholy nature, does require such helps. I myself am driven to it—but what more, my friend? Are they grave in their discourse?"

"As heart could wish," replied the landlord. "I should take them rather for the most pious and humble—"

"I will see them myself," interrupted Dry, who began to suspect the landlord. "It is not easy to deceive my eyes."

But the worthy host contrived to detain his worshipful fellow-townsman for some five minutes longer, in order that the guests might finish their meal in peace, by opening a conversation relative to the return of "the poor silly girl, Arrah Neil," as he called her, in regard to whom he had shrewd suspicions that Mr. Dry of Longsoaken entertained sentiments not quite so rigid as those which his words in the morning might seem to imply.

On this part of their conversation, however, I shall not dwell, as it would be neither very instructive nor very amusing, but will return once more to the parlour of the inn, which Mr. Dry of Longsoaken entered with a staid and stately step, his two eyes bent upon the ground, as if he were in deep meditation. The younger of the two guests in the parlour lolled in his chair and bit his lip. The elder considered Mr. Dry attentively, but suffered him to enter the room and approach the table without saying a word. Neither did he make any movement of limb or feature, but remained cold, stiff, and dry, as if his limbs and his countenance were made of wood. Mr. Dry, however, always recollected that he was a man in authority; and great success in life, where there is any weakness of character, is sure to produce a confident self-importance, very comfortable to the possessor thereof, though not particularly agreeable to his friends and companions.

As neither of the others uttered a word, then, he began the conversation himself without further delay.

"I trust we are brethren, sir," he said, addressing the gentleman whom we have called Randal.

"I trust we are so," replied the other.

"Ahem!" said Mr. Dry. "My name is Dry, sir; Dry of Longsoaken."

"You may be soaked long enough," murmured the man at the table to himself, not loud enough to be heard,—"you may be soaked long enough before you are moistened, Mr. Dry."

But his companion, who saw his lips move, gave him a grave look, and replied to the intruder, "I am happy to hear it, sir. It is a godly name, which I have heard of before. Will you never have done with that beef, Master Barecolt?"

"But this mouthful, but this mouthful," replied the gentleman at the table, "and then I am with you."

"One word before you go," said Mr. Dry: "you seem, sir, a godly and well-disposed man, and I doubt not have been led into the right way; but there is an air of prelatic malignancy about this person at the table."

"You are altogether mistaken, worthy Dry," said the good gentleman who had been paying such devoted attention to the beef; "there is nothing malignant about my nature, and the air you talk of is but a remnant of French manners caught while I was serving our Calvinistic brethren in that poor benighted land. In me, sir, you behold him whom you may have heard of—who in the morning preached to the people in the beleaguered city of Rochelle, from the 2nd verse of the 24th chapter of the book of Joshua, 'Your fathers dwelt on the other

side of the flood in old time;' and who in the evening led them out to battle, and smote the Philistines hip and thigh. That is to say, broke through the stockade, and defeated two regiments of the guards."

"I have heard of the deed," replied Mr. Dry.

"Then you must have heard likewise," said the gentleman at the table, rising up at full length, and making the intruder a low bow, "of Master Deciduous Barecolt."

"I think I have, I think I have," said Mr. Dry.

"Then, again," cried Barecolt, "when I defended the pass in the Cevennes, with only two godly companions, against the Count de Suza and a hundred and fifty bloodthirsty Papists —you must surely have heard of that exploit."

"I cannot say I have," replied Mr. Dry.

"Then, sir, you are ignorant of the history of Europe," answered the other, with a look of high indignation; "for I trust the name of Deciduous Barecolt is known from the mouth of the Elbe to the mouth of the Danube, and will descend to posterity upon the stream of time, only rendered imperishable by that which destroys other things. Good-night, Mr. Dry. Now, Master Randal, I am ready to accompany you. Shall we sing a psalm before we go?"

"No," replied Randal abruptly, and, picking up his hat, he led the way out of the room.

The inn was situated near the extremity of the town; and at the distance of about two hundred paces from the door the two strangers emerged from between the lines of the houses, and found themselves among the hedgerows. Without any hesitation as to the track which he was to pursue, the younger gentleman mounted a stile to the right, and took a path which, crossing the fields, wound gradually up over one slope after another till it reached the brow of the hill on which Bishop's Merton House was placed.

It was a fine clear moonlight night; and at the distance of about a mile from the mansion they caught a sight of its wide front, extending along the hill till the wings were concealed by a little wood, behind which, as they walked on, the whole building was speedily lost.

"It is a fine old place," said Barecolt to his companion; "it always puts me in mind of the Escurial."

"More likely puts you in mind of the stocks," said Randal; "for you have both seen and felt the one, and never set eyes upon the other."

"How can you tell that I never saw it?" exclaimed his companion; "you have not had the dandling of me ever since I was a baby in arms."

"Heaven forbid!" cried Randal; "but I am sure you never have seen it, because you say you have. However, you must either speak truth to-night or hold your tongue. I did not stop you in your course of gasconade with that roundheaded knave at the inn, because I knew that you must void a certain quantity of falsehood in the day, and it was necessary to get rid of it before you came up here; for this young lord is not one to take counterfeit coin."

"The monster!" exclaimed Barecolt; "there is not a more cruel or barbarous creature in the earth than the man who drives from his door all the sweet little children of the imagination which you call lies. He is wanting in all human charity. Give me the generous and confiding soul who believes everything that is said to him, and enjoys the story of a traveller who relates to him wild scenes in lands he never has visited just as much as if it were all as true as history—"

"Which is itself a lie," rejoined the other. "Had this young man's father been alive, you would have found a person after your own heart. He was a man of vast capabilities of belief. His mind was but a looking-glass, always representing what was before it; his religion was in the last sermon he had heard, his politics in the last broadsheet, his opinions those of his companions for the hour, his taste the newest mode that he had seen. He was the quintessence of an ordinary-minded man; but his son is a very different being."

Barecolt made no rash promise of abstaining from his favourite amusement, but walked on for about a hundred yards in silence, till suddenly his companion exclaimed, "Do you not see a strange light shining through the wood before us? Hark, there is an alarum-bell!" And, hurrying his pace, he issued forth from the wood some three hundred yards farther on, where the cause of the light they had remarked became too visible.

Rising up from one of the flanking towers of the old house, in large white volumes, to the very sky, was a tall column of smoke, spreading out towards the top, while from the building itself poured forth the rushing flame like a huge beacon, illuminating all the country round. Each window in that tower and the neighbouring wing emitted the same blaze; and it was very evident—although a number of persons were seen moving about upon the terrace, engaged apparently in the endeavour to extinguish the fire—that it was making its way rapidly towards the rest of the house.

The two strangers ran as fast as possible to give assistance. But before I pursue their adventures on that night, I must turn to speak of all that had taken place within the mansion of Bishop's Merton during the evening preceding the disaster which I have described.

CHAPTER III.

THERE was in the mansion of Bishop's Merton one of those delightful old chambers which, like a warm and benevolent heart, have a nook for every one. It was a large wide room, with a recess on one side big enough to have formed another room, and a lesser recess at each corner, on the same side, made by two small square

turrets, each lighted by its own windows, and containing tables and chairs of its own, so that the studious or the meditative, but not the unsociable, could sit and read, or muse apart, without being actually cut off from the society assembled. The walls were all covered with tapestry, descended through many generations in the same family, and which had covered the walls of a similar chamber in an old castle, partly destroyed during the civil wars of the Roses, and pulled down at the commencement of the reign of Henry the Eighth.

Out from the tapestry, however, after an old fashion, which certainly showed pictures to much greater advantage than when plastered upon the face of the wall, stood a great many portraits of different degrees of art, supported at the lower part by a gilt iron bracket, and upheld in a slightly sloping position by an iron bar at the top. From the cold, severe Holbein to the rich and juicy Rubens and the poetical Vandyke, all the famous artists of the last two centuries had exercised their pencils in portraying the features of a race which had always been fruitful in beauty; and the history of the changeful mind of those two ages was shadowed forth in the varying costume in which the characters appeared. Nor is it, let me say, dear reader, in passing, a slight indication of the state of the popular mind that is afforded by the dress of the day. Look at the Cavalier in his long floating locks, his silks and velvets, and at the Roundhead, in his steeple hat, his straight-cut suit and prim cloak, each with his heavy-hilted sword and large flapping gloves, and say whether Naseby field and Marston Moor, and all the deeds on either part, do not naturally, and not purely historically, connect themselves with such apparel; and then turn to ourselves, with our straight-cut frock-coats, neat, close-fitting boots, and other mathematical habiliments, which seem to have been fashioned by the rules and compasses of a Laputan sage, and tell me whether they do not plainly speak of an age of railroads and steamboats.

There, however, stood the pictures of the brave and beautiful of other times, bending down over their once-familiar halls and the doings of their descendants, as the spirits of the dead may be supposed to gaze upon the actions of the children they have left behind; and there in the oriel window, just about the time of day at which we commenced this tale, sat a creature whom those long-gone bold warriors and lovely dames might look upon with pride, and own her of their blood.

It was a lady of some twenty years of age, not very tall, but yet, if anything, above the middle height of women. She was very beautiful too in feature, with a skin as white as alabaster and as smooth, yet with the rose glowing in her cheek, and her arched lips red and full of health.

I have long discovered that it is impossible to paint beauty with the pen; and therefore I will say no more than may be sufficient merely to give the reader some idea of what kind and sort hers was of, more that the harmony which ought always, and generally does, in some degree exist between the form and mind may be understood than to draw a picture of which imagination would still have to fill up half the details. Though her skin, as I have said, was so fair, her hair, her eyebrows, and her eyes were dark—not exactly black, for in them all there was a gleam of sunny warmth which like the dawn brightened the deep hue of night. The expression of her countenance was generally gay and cheerful, but varying often, as a heart quickly susceptible of strong feelings, and a mind full of imagination, were affected by the events in which she took part and the circumstances around her. Youth and health and bountiful nature had endued her form with manifold graces; and though her limbs were full and rounded in contour, yet they displayed in every movement lines of exquisite symmetry, and, like the brother of Joab, she was swift of foot as the wild roe. As is often the case with persons of quick fancy, her mind, though naturally of a cheerful and hopeful bent, was nevertheless not unfrequently overshadowed by a cloud of passing melancholy; and a look of sadness would occasionally come into her fair face, as if the consciousness which is in most hearts that this world of glittering delusions has its darker scenes, even for those of the brightest fate, made itself painfully felt at times when no apparent cause for grief or apprehension was near. But such shadows passed quickly away, and the general tone of her heart and her expression was, as we have said, bright and sunshiny.

Her father had been a man who took his ideas greatly from those amongst whom he lived. In short, he attributed too much importance to the opinions of his fellow-men. We may attribute too little to them, it is true, and even great men are bound to pay some deference to the deliberate judgment of many: but it is usually—nay, invariably—a sign of weak understanding, to depend for the tone of our own thoughts upon those around. However, as he was thrown into the society of men who set great value upon accomplishments, such as they were in those days, he had made a point of having his daughter instructed in all the lighter arts of the times. To sing, to dance, to play on various instruments, to speak the two languages most in fashion at the court, French and Italian, with the ease and accent of a native, had seemed to him matters of vast importance; and, as she showed every facility in acquiring whatever he desired, he had no cause to be discontented with her progress. She might perhaps have been taught to consider such things of much importance too; but she had a mother—the safeguard of God to our early years. That mother was a woman of a high and noble mind, somewhat stern, perhaps, and rigid, yet not unkind or unfeeling; and between a parent weak, though possessed of talent, and one keen and powerful in intellect, though not quick or brilliant, it

may easily be guessed which gave the stronger impress to the mind of the child. Thus Annie Walton learned somewhat to undervalue the accomplishments which, to please her father, she acquired; and though she possessed less of the stern, calm, determined character of her mother than her brother Charles, and more of the pliant and easy disposition of her father, yet she inherited a share of high resolution and firm decision, which was requisite, even in a woman, to enable her to encounter the dangers and difficulties of the times in which she lived.

She sat then in the oriel window of the hall at Bishop's Merton, reading a page printed roughly on coarse paper, while now a smile, somewhat saddened, and now a look of anger, somewhat brightened by the half-faded smile, passed over her sweet face, as, in one of the broadsheets of the day which had been left with her a few minutes before by Mr. Dry of Longsoaken, she saw the doings of a parliament which began by asserting the rights of the people, and ended by attacking the just prerogatives of the crown; which commenced by opposing tyranny and deceit in the rulers of the land, and ended by far exceeding all the tyranny and deceit it had opposed, and adding the most beastly hypocrisy and violence, fraud, rapine, and cruelty, to the crimes and follies which it had found existing. She read and smiled—she read and sighed; for, though her family had taken no part in the deeds of the last twelve months, and though her mother had been through life rather attached to the doctrines of the Presbyterians than their opponents, yet there was something in the cause of the Cavaliers, with all their faults, in their very rashness and want of all pretence—something in the cold-blooded hypocrisy and false pretexts of the Parliamentarians—which had engaged her sympathies on the losing side, and roused her indignation against the successful.

While she was thus occupied, a horseman passed rapidly before the window towards the principal door of the house, crossing like a quick bird in its flight; and, casting down the paper, Miss Walton ran out, murmuring, "It is Charles!"

There was a large old-fashioned vestibule hung with pikes and arms, corslets and head-pieces, and stags' antlers, and hunting horns, and all the implements of real battle and of the mimic warfare of the chase. The door leading to the terrace stood wide open, with an old servant on either side; and as she bounded forward with the expectation of meeting her brother, her countenance beaming with pleasure to greet him on his return, a stranger entered, and advanced at once towards her.

Annie Walton's face suddenly became graver, and a blush rose into her cheek; but the cavalier came forward with a frank and unembarrassed air, walked straight up to her, and took her hand as if he had been an old friend.

"You thought it was your brother," he said, with easy grace, saving her all trouble of explanation, "and you are disappointed, Miss Walton. Would that I had a sister to look so joyful on my return to my old halls! but your disappointment will have no long life. Charles Walton will be here ere the world be an hour older; and in the meantime you must show me and my poor beast fair hospitality till the master of the mansion comes himself to tell you more about his friend, Sir Francis Clare."

He bowed as he thus introduced himself, and Annie Walton, with all courtesy, but with a grave air, invited him to the hall where she had been sitting, trying to call to mind the name he had mentioned amongst those of all her brother's acquaintances. She could recollect no such person, however, as Sir Francis Clare; and although there was in the frankness of the stranger's manner something that pleased her, yet she almost thought it too free in one whom she could not believe to be very intimate with Lord Walton. Yet there was a grace as well as an ease in his demeanour, a tone not easily described, but which can only be acquired by long, intimate habits of familiarity with persons of high mind and education, a self-possession, distinct from impudence, which showed her at once that the visitor was not one of the wild and reckless roysterers of the court and army of King Charles, who presumed without merit, and endeavoured to cover vulgarity of spirit with self-confidence.

Leading the way, then, to the hall, she begged the stranger to be seated. He bowed, and let her take her place, while he remained standing before her, calculating rapidly what was passing in her thoughts, and, to say truth, somewhat struck with the beauty of this cynosure of neighbouring eyes, who, whatever he might have expected to find, went far in loveliness beyond his imagination.

There was a momentary pause while she thought of what was next to come; but the stranger spoke first. "I must seem very bold, I fear, and somewhat too free, Miss Walton," he said at length, "in thus treating you as an old acquaintance; but the circumstances of these days engender strange habit of rapidity in all our doings. Rough times abridge ceremonies; and, besides, when our thoughts are familiar even with those whom we have never met, a sort of one-sided friendship grows up in our breasts towards them which makes us forget that it is not reciprocal. I have so often heard your brother talk of you, so often conversed with him of you, that I may think myself lucky that at our first meeting I did not offend you by calling you Annie."

"It would have surprised more than offended," replied his fair companion, with a smile; "but Charles will, I trust, soon make us better acquainted. Have you seen him lately?"

"Not for five years," answered Francis Clare; "and yet, sweet lady, I know more of his proceedings than you do, who parted from him but a week ago; not that he is deep-dyed in plots and conspiracies kept from his sister's ear, but

simply because he wrote to me yesterday one of his brief but comprehensive notes, telling me what he purposed, and giving me a rendezvous here to-day, which I, with my usual impatience, have run before by nearly an hour. I heard of him, too, as I came along; and though I found that I should be before him, yet I hurried on, not to surprise his sister all alone, and make her wonder what rash man had come to visit her, believe me."

"Such an object were little worth the spur, sir," replied the lady, laughing; "but if I understand you aright, your friendship with my brother must have begun when he was in France."

"Long before that," replied the cavalier; "but when last I parted with him he was in Italy, where he left me to return to his own house. We bade each other farewell under the Loggia di Lanzi, in the fair town of Florence."

"Oh, how I long to see that place!" cried Annie Walton; "it is one of the dreams of my imagination, which perhaps may never be realized."

"Few dreams of the imagination ever are," answered her companion. "He who gives himself up to fancy is like a man led by a child, who tells him of all the wonderful things that he will show him in the garden of the world, and when he comes to see the marvels, he finds them but May blossoms and brier roses, that fade as soon as gathered, and leave a bunch of thorns in his hand."

Annie Walton raised her eyes to the stranger's brow, and gazed at the rich floating hair that covered it, to see if she could trace any of the marks of that age which has proved the world and discovered its delusions. But all was youthful and open; there was nothing grey or grave, and she replied,—

"You speak sadly of this earth and its enjoyments, sir; and yet I would not part with Fancy and all her pleasant deceits if I could."

"Never, never!" cried Sir Francis Clare eagerly. "If I may use a paradox, sweet lady, the deceits of reality are ten times more dangerous than those of imagination. If all things are delusions except the hopes of a higher and a holier world, let us keep the pleasant delusions at least, and they are those of fancy. But what have we here? The last news from London?"

"The reply of the parliament to the king's message," answered the lady; "and thirty-one good reasons for rejecting his majesty's offers, with the godly and soul-saving declaration of several pious men concerning Popery and Prelacy."

The stranger laughed.

"How easy is it," he cried, "to cover gross treason, not only to king, but to country, with fair pretexts of freedom, or to hide what they themselves call the most carnal self-seeking with a garb of religious zeal, and to give the fairest names to the blackest passions of our nature! 'Tis a trite remark, but one that forces itself upon us every day; and yet this is the trade that succeeds in the world, so that gross deceit raises itself to high places, and sits in purple and fine linen, while honesty is left to beg her bread, and plain truth stands shivering in a ragged blanket."

"But I should think such barefaced hypocrisy as this," answered the lady, "would deceive no one. People may pretend to believe it, but it must be mere affectation, as bad as the hypocrisy itself."

"Your pardon, madam," replied the cavalier; "there never yet was falsehood, however impudent, which, often repeated and told with a smooth face, would not find many to give it ready credence. Not a day passes but we see some monstrous lie, decked out with strong assurances of sincerity and zeal, pass current with the multitude. Oh, lady, there is an appetite for falsehood in the world that makes the many-headed monster gorge the food, however dirty, and, like a hungry dog, pluck morsels from the very kennel! Yet there is some truth, too, in what these people say. I am not one to cover them with bad names; for, alas! however wrong they may be now, the king put himself in fault at first. The man who suffers himself to be compelled to do justice to others will, some time or another, have to compel others to do justice to him; and he who has abandoned his friends in time of need will surely have to lament their loss when he has to struggle with enemies."

"And has the king done this?" asked Annie Walton.

"Strafford, Strafford," said the cavalier, with a melancholy shake of the head; "bold, firm-hearted, gallant Strafford! That fatal error was the downfall of King Charles. Where is the hand that now shall raise him up? Lady, when a general finds himself in a town about to be besieged by the enemy, he strengthens his fortifications, and throws down all the scattered houses and indefensible suburbs that might give the foes advantage in their approach; but the king pursued a different course; he threw down his defences, and maintained all the suburbs and weak points. But this is sorry conversation for a lady's ears," he continued. "What a fair scene does this window show! In riding through the low ground I did not mark all the beauty around me."

"It is indeed as fine a view as any in the country round," replied Annie Walton; "and often, when I feel sad at heart, I come and gaze out here, and seem to find comfort and confidence from the sight."

"And are you ever sad at heart?" asked Sir Francis Clare, with a smile.

"Not very often, it is true," she answered; "but still, in the present disturbed state of the country, which is like one of those dark storms through which one can see no glimpse of coming sunshine, I cannot but sometimes feel fears and apprehensions—not for myself, indeed, for no one would hurt a woman, I suppose, but for my brother; and when I am thus depressed I need

the sight of things which speak, with a voice not to be misunderstood, of God's power and His goodness too, to show me that though the tempest may rage for a time, it will give place to brighter hours at last, and perhaps in itself work benefit even while it seems destined to destroy."

"Oh, may you ever feel thus!" cried the cavalier eagerly; "for it was such faith brought back the dove to the ark at length. Yet often, when we see a world of roaring waters around us, and destruction on every side, the heart will sink, and trust and confidence give way for a time. But still," he added, laughing, "I am not one to entertain many sombre thoughts; and if the gay companions of thoughtless hours could know with what sad ideas I have entertained a fair lady, they would recommend me a Geneva skull-cap and a straight black cloak. I can assure you, our talk in the court is much less solemn. Except for an hour in the morning, when we speak soberly of war and policy, as men take a walk after breakfast for a good digestion, our days pass much in the consideration of lace collars, the fashion of sword-knots, and of how to get them. The world, I believe, and most of the things in it, are not worth the waste of five minutes' heavy thought; and, weighed in a just balance, perhaps, a madrigal and a charge of horse, a sonnet of tiffany poetry and the plan of a campaign, are matters much more nearly of the same importance than we think. But there comes your brother, or I am mistaken."

"Yes, yes!" cried the lady gladly, gazing out of the open window into the valley, along which a small party of horsemen were riding; "he will be here directly." And she and her companion, whose conversation had greatly won upon her, continued watching the progress of the young Lord Walton, as he rode rapidly along the valley, till he was hid behind the high-wooded banks, near which, as we have already related, he paused to hold a short conversation with poor Arrah Neil. They wondered what detained him so long under the trees; but after a brief pause he appeared again, and in a few minutes he sprang from his horse at the hall-door.

CHAPTER IV.

"Ha, Francis!" exclaimed Lord Walton, grasping the cavalier's hand with warm eagerness, as soon as he had received the embrace of his sister; "are you here before me? You must have used the spur from Worcester, if your letter left the good town before you."

"I have used the spur, Charles," replied his friend, "on purpose to outrun you, and introduce myself to this fair lady without your assistance. You know I was always the most impatient of mortals, and strange, I fear, she thought me; for I could plainly see that she had never heard the name of Francis Clare before." He spoke the last words with a gay laugh and some emphasis.

"Perhaps not," answered Lord Walton, with a grave smile; "but she must know you now, Francis, as one of her brother's dearest and oldest friends. However, I must send her away from us for a minute, for I have a task for her, sad, but pleasing to perform. I just now found poor Arrah Neil, dear Annie," he continued; "she was sitting by the Bishop's Well, dark and sorrowful, as well she may be. The poor old man Neil is dead. They dragged him as far as Devizes, where the lamp that has burned so faintly for the last two years went out, and the poor girl has found her way back hither. Something must be done for her, Annie; and till we can settle what, she must stay here. I left Langan with her to bring her up; so see to her comfort, sister, for by her dress I think they must have robbed her by the way."

"Poor child!" cried Annie Walton. "I was sure the old man would die. Can these really be Christians, Charles—for a few rash words, spoken in haste, to take a man of seventy from his sick-bed?"

"His words meant more than they seemed, Annie," answered her brother; "at least, so I gather from their answer to my application for his release; but see to her comfort, dear girl, and then come back to us, for the poor thing spoke of some evil hanging over me here, and, though at times so strange, I have often remarked she speaks not lightly."

"No indeed, Charles," replied his sister, with an anxious look. "Evil hanging over you? What can she mean?"

"I know not, Annie," replied Lord Walton. "Nothing has happened to cause you alarm, has there?"

"Nothing," she answered. "Dry of Long-soaken was here this morning, but he was all smoothness and civility."

"That looks ill," said Sir Francis Clare. "He must be a Roundhead by his name; and whenever they speak smoothly, beware of the serpent in the grass."

"And he is a serpent, if ever the earth produced one," answered Lord Walton thoughtfully. "Did he speak smoothly and civilly? So, so! What was the object of his visit, Annie? or had he any apparent object?"

"Purely, it seemed," replied Miss Walton, "to ask after my health during what he called your long absence. I told him your absence had not been long—only a week; and that you had already concluded your business with the committee, and would return to-day. So then he left that paper with me, which he said must be marrow and fatness to all well-disposed noblemen like yourself. But indeed he seemed well affected towards you, and said, I now recollect, something about the people of Bishop's Merton having encroached upon your land at Sarham, which he should be happy to set right for you, and which he could do, if you pleased, without your name appearing in the matter, so

as not to affect your popularity with the God-fearing people of the place."

"Where did he learn I ever feared to have my name appear in any act I did?" asked Charles Walton proudly. "'Tis but such low and creeping things as he is who do things they dare not own. He had some other object; this is all a pretence. But go, dear Annie; there is Langan with the poor girl: perhaps she will tell you more than she would say to me; but do not press her, Annie, if she be unwilling. And now, Francis," he continued, as his sister left the room, "first, welcome after so long an absence; next, what is this serious business that you would speak with me upon?"

"Faith, but a little matter as the world goes," replied his friend; "and yet one which would have been considered mighty some ten years ago. Now men draw two straws for the longest, or toss up a crown-piece to know which party they will choose; whether they will fight for their rightful king or his rebel parliament—"

"Not quite so, Francis," replied Charles Walton seriously; "with me, at least, the question would ever be a serious one, whether I should draw my sword for the representatives of the people of England, when fighting for the just liberties of the land, or for a sovereign who has somewhat infringed them,—even if the case stood exactly as the parliament puts it; but—"

"I am glad you have added those words, Charles," interrupted the cavalier; "for on them hangs all the rest. The king is willing to do ample justice to all men. Granted that he has committed faults—and who has greater cause to complain than I have?—granted that he has had bad advisers—granted that he sacrificed Strafford—"

"A terrible fault indeed!" replied Lord Walton.

"Granted that his exactions were unjust—ship-money a breach of the best and soundest laws—the Star-chamber an iniquitous tyranny; still these errors were a part of his inheritance; and perhaps, if we looked closely, we should find that our fathers who suffered, and by suffering encouraged such things,—who fawned upon the hand that pressed them to the ground—who bowed readily to tyranny whenever it stretched forth its rod,—have as great a share of the responsibility as he has who only used the powers transmitted to him by his predecessors. But I came not to discuss such questions, Charles Walton. The king has committed errors; he grieves for them; he is ready to repair them; he has done all that man can do to remedy evils past and provide security against their recurrence. He calls upon every loyal subject to aid him, not only in defending the throne itself, but the country, from those who would evidently shake its constitution to the ground, overthrow its best institutions, and establish, if not the reign of anarchy, the rule of a many-headed monster, which will, if tolerated, end in a despotism more terrible than any we have yet seen within the land. And will Charles Walton, gallant and chivalrous as he is known to be—will he refuse to obey that call? Or is he, who was wont to be so clear-sighted and so keen, one of those who believe that the pretences of the parliament are true; that they seek but to reduce the power of the crown within due limits, to lop the prerogative of those branches that bore oppression, and secure the freedom of the people, yet leave the stability of the throne? Or does he approve of hypocritical pretexts even to gain such ends? No, no! I know him better."

"Certainly," replied the young nobleman, "I neither approve the practices nor believe the pretences of the parliament. But I have hitherto trusted, my dear friend, though they may be now intoxicated with authority, the exercise of which is new to them, and in their pride may encroach upon both the prerogative of the crown and the liberty of the subject,—for I can conceive a parliament to become a more terrible tyrant than even a monarch,—yet I say, I have trusted that the wiser and the better members of that body will recover from the drunkenness that some have felt and the fears that have affected others; and that, at all events, if any dangerous and outrageous exercise of power should take place, those who have never favoured the arbitrary use of the royal prerogative, or the licentious exactions of the commons, may have sufficient weight to counterbalance that authority which is but delegated by the people, and which the people can again resume."

"Fatal confidence," exclaimed the cavalier, with a dark and melancholy look, "which never has been, never will be justified! Yet it is one that in all civil strifes many wise and many good men have entertained, till they discovered, when too late, how cruelly they had deceived themselves; till, hanging between two parties and supporting neither, they saw the one sink lower and lower, and the other, which perhaps they most condemned, rise into power, and go on in evil; and then, when they strove to arrest the course of wrong, found themselves either carried away by the current and involved in wickedness they would fain have opposed, or sunk beneath the torrent with those who endeavoured to divert it while it was yet feeble, and whose efforts they might have rendered successful had they joined therein in time. Let me tell you, Charles, that in the history of all contentions such as those that now shake the land there is a time when the balance of sincerity and right is clearly on one side, and that it is then true lovers of their country should step in with their whole strength to turn the balance of power upon that side also. There is such a time, believe me; and now is the moment!"

"Perhaps it is," answered Lord Walton thoughtfully. "I said, my friend, that I had hitherto felt the impressions I described. I did not deny that they are somewhat shaken, perhaps more than I believe."

"When that time has come," continued the

cavalier, without appearing to mark his reply, "it is the duty of every man to ask himself, On which side is now the right? on which side is now the danger? and, casting away the memory of old faults and old grievances, to choose boldly and conscientiously between the two. If he choose well, it will be easy for him at any after time to guard against a renewal of errors on the part of those whom he supports; but if, from any fear of such a renewal, he turn to the side which he knows to be acting amiss, he commits himself for ever to the errors he supports, and can never hope to stop their course or avert their consequences. What I ask you to do is this—to choose. I say not, join the king; I say not, oppose the parliament: I merely say, lay your hand upon your heart, forgetting mistakes that are past; ask yourself, which is now right, and which is now wrong? and choose as your conscience may direct."

Lord Walton paused for a few moments in deep thought; then, giving his hand to his friend, he said, "I will! Ask me no more at present, Francis; nor inquire whether, when I say *I will*, I might not say *I have*. Resolutions such as these had better be spoken of as little as possible till they can be executed. Stay till to-morrow morning, then back to the king. Your further presence here might be dangerous to yourself and hurtful to your cause. And now to other things. How long had you been here before I came?"

"Long enough to find it a dangerous abode, good friend," replied the cavalier. "In truth, Walton, if you have not got an angel here, you have what is more like one than anything my eyes have yet seen."

"Oh, I know your gallant speeches!" answered Charles Walton, with a laugh, his face losing the grave cast which was habitual to it, and brightening with cheerful light; "but Annie is well accustomed to hear sweet things, and I fear not the effect of high-flown southern compliments on her little heart, which, however gentle, is firm enough to stand a longer siege than any you will have time to give it. But," he added, while his brow grew sad again, "I will own to you, Francis, it is her future fate that in these troublous times half makes a coward of me; and though, knowing what is right, that will I do, yet there is a hesitating fear within me, lest, in the course I am destined to pursue, I may bring down sorrow and misfortune upon that bright, kind being who has ever been my sunshine and my hope."

"I can feel that it must be so, Charles," replied his friend gravely. "Had I a sister such as that, it would be so with me. Therein I can do little to console, and perhaps less to counsel or to help you. But yet, Charles Walton, you know I am something of the ancient knight; my sword and my heart for my king and my fair lady; and without any rash promising of love for one whom I have only known an hour—such as one-half of our gay courtiers would make—I give you my word that, whatever befalls you, so long as life and strength last, my next thought, after my duty to God and my sovereign, shall be to care for the protection and safety of my friend's sister."

Lord Walton smiled, with a look in which pleasure and grief were strangely blended, but he replied nothing, merely once more pressing Clare's hand.

"Why do you smile, Charles?" asked the cavalier. "Is it that you think me too young, too light, too gay, to take such a task upon myself? My honour, my regard, you do not doubt, I know; and as for the rest, these are days when the old times of chivalry must revive, or the sun will set in darkness indeed; and in those ancient periods, men young as I am have, with a holy devotion, been the safeguards and protectors of dames well-nigh as fair and bright as this, if we may believe the tales we read."

"But those tales still ended in a marriage, Francis," said Lord Walton.

"Well, there let it!" cried the cavalier gaily. "Here I dedicate my heart and sword to her. Those bright eyes shall be my lode-stars on the road to glory, her smile give double vigour to my arm and fresh sharpness to my lance. There, Walton—is not that the true Orlando? But, seriously, what meant your somewhat rueful smile just now? Was it that you thought the gay youth of former days but little fit to supply a brother's place in time of need? or, perhaps, still less to take a husband's duties on him, if fate and circumstances should draw your sister's heart towards him? But let me tell you, Charles, that half of the lightness was the cover of deep and painful thoughts; and, besides, these are times that make even the thoughtless think; and when I buckled me to the cause I serve, I cast away and left in foreign lands all but the higher purposes of the heart."

"No, no, Francis," replied Lord Walton, interrupting him; "it was neither doubt, nor fear, nor mockery that made me smile. You do not suppose that, did I not know and see all that is noble and generous in your nature and bright and keen in your mind, I would not have taken you to my heart as I have done. That there might be some weeds in the garden I will not deny; but they were only such as an hour's labour would pluck out with ease, or such as would wither away under the first hot sun, and leave the flowers and fruit behind uninjured. I smiled but to remember that some five years ago, when we were both in happier days than these, I often thought that I would gladly give my Annie to my early friend, but little dreamed that times might come when he himself would offer, ere he had seen her twice, to be her defender and protector in case of her brother's death; and who shall say, Francis, how soon such loss may call for such support? But here she comes again; let us say no more of this; but I thank you, thank you from my heart for all you promise. I know right well that promise will be kept, if it cost your last drop of blood."

The faces of both gentlemen were grave when

Annie Walton joined them, and on hers too there were traces of some tears.

"Poor Arrah Neil!" she said; "hers has indeed been a hard fate. She has made me weep with the tale of the old man's sufferings, so mildly and so sweetly did she tell it. But I could obtain no further information in regard to the danger she apprehended might befall you, Charles; and I cannot but think that her words were spoken in one of those strange dreamy moods that sometimes fall upon her."

"I think so too," answered Lord Walton; "at least it may be so. Where have you lodged her, Annie?"

"She is with good Dame Rachel now," answered his sister; "but to-night she is to have the little room near the west tower, and to-morrow you must tell me more of your plans for her, Charles."

"I will, I will," replied Lord Walton; "to-morrow — ay, to-morrow," and he fell into thought without concluding the sentence.

The evening passed more cheerfully than the conversation which has been detailed seemed to promise. All were anxious to snatch a few hours from the gloomy thoughts that hung over the times, and few allusions were made to the circumstances of the day; but any other subject which minds full of rich stores could produce was chosen, as if to exclude more sombre topics. From time to time, indeed, both Annie Walton and their new companion would for a moment or two look grave and sad, as some passing cloud of thought swept over them; but the young lord, whose power over himself was great, kept the same even tenor, not gay, for such was not his disposition; not gloomy or meditative, for he did not choose to be so, but calm and easy, conversing without apparent effort on a thousand varied things, and never for an instant showing the least absence or forgetfulness. Yet, perhaps, all felt that there were dangers and disasters abroad on every side, though they sat there as a cheerful party, with the windows of the heart closed against the storm that raged without.

There was but one moment when a shadow seemed to fall upon all, and that too was produced by a song. Charles Walton had asked his sister to sing before they parted for the night; and after some thought, seeking in vain for a livelier strain, she chose—perhaps from the irrepressible anxieties of her own heart—a little ballad, which had been a favourite of her mother's, to the following effect:—

THE SONG.

Hope sung a song of future years,
Replete with sunny hours,
When present sorrow's dew-like tears
Should all be hid in flowers.

But Memory backward turned her eyes,
And taught the heart to fear
More stormy clouds, more angry skies,
With each succeeding year.

But still Hope sung, as by that voice
Such warnings sad were given,
In louder strains bade Youth rejoice,
And Age look on to heaven.

Each kept silence for a minute or two after the song was done, and each gave a sigh; but then the cavalier would fain have persuaded Miss Walton to sing again, for her voice was one of those full of native music, which the ear longs for when once heard, as the weary heart of manhood thirsts to taste again the fearless joys of infancy. But she declined, saying she was somewhat weary; and shortly after the little party separated for the night.

Charles Walton shook his friend's hand warmly as they parted, at a yet early hour, and adding to the good-night, "We will speak more before you go to-morrow," he himself retired to his chamber, to pass several hours in meditation ere he lay down to rest.

As soon as he was alone, the young lord sent away a servant who was waiting for him, and then leaned his head upon his hand for some ten minutes without moving. At length he raised his eyes to a heavy sword that hung above the old carved mantelpiece, rose, took it down, drew it from the sheath, and gazed upon the blade. There were some dents and notches in the edge; and, saying in a low tone, "It has done good service—it may do more," he thrust it back again, and hung it up as before.

"I will go to my cabinet and write two lines to the king," he added, after a short pause; but then again he stopped and meditated, murmuring, "No, it were better not to write: such documents are dangerous. I will send a message. I see they suspect me already. It were as well to destroy the commission and those other papers, and, if at all, at once. I will do it now. What is the matter?" he continued, as some one knocked at the door.

"Charles! Charles!" cried his sister, coming into the room; and as he sprang to meet her, he saw that her face was very pale.

"There is a terrible smoke," she exclaimed, "and a rushing sound like fire!"

"Where? where?" asked her brother, eagerly hurrying towards the door.

"In the corridor, beyond my room," answered Annie, "towards the west wing. Oh, bid them ring the alarum-bell!"

"On no account! on no account!" cried her brother, darting out. "Call all the servants, Annie! Run, Alice!" he continued, to one of his sister's maids, who had followed her, pale and trembling; "send Hugh and Roger here, and then call the rest. Smoke, indeed! There is fire somewhere! Quick, girl, quick! Go back, my Annie, and dress yourself again. I will soon tell you more." And thus saying, he hurried on through the wide gallery, upon which the door of his bedroom opened, and then along the corridor beyond.

The smoke grew thicker at each step he took; the crackling and rushing sound of fire soon became audible, and then a fitful flash broke across the obscurity, like that of a signal-gun seen through a heavy mist.

In a minute he was at a large door which closed the end of the corridor, and through the

neighbouring window he could see the projection of one of the flanking towers, with a small loop-hole showing a red glare within.

"Here is the fire," he cried, "in my own cabinet! How can this have happened?" and he laid his hand upon the latch. The door was locked. He tried to turn the key, but it was embarrassed. "Bring me an axe!" he exclaimed, hearing several of the servants following him rapidly. "Bring me an axe directly—quick—quick!—all the papers will be burned," and again he tried to turn the key.

"The charter-chests were removed, my lord, to the next room," said the good servant Langan. "I moved them myself by your own order, just before we went, that the floor might be repaired."

The young lord laid his hand upon his brow for an instant, and then said, "Let the rest perish then! It is no matter;" and just as he spoke, the alarum-bell rang loud and long.

"What fool has done that?" exclaimed Charles Walton. "Ah, Francis! is that you?" he continued, speaking to Sir Francis Clare, who was up and following him fully dressed. "A word in your ear: mount your horse quickly and begone," he whispered. "We shall have all the country on us in half an hour. See, there are some twenty on the terrace already. Langan, here—go the round with this gentleman to the stables by the back way, then through the wood with him till he is beyond the grounds. Francis, say I am determined!" he added again, lowering his voice. "You shall see me soon. Away, away, good friend! You know not the people here."

By this time servants were hurrying up with buckets of water and with axes to break down the door; but before he suffered that to be done, Lord Walton turned to one of those behind, saying, "See to poor Arrah Neil; she is in the chamber just beneath us. Take her to your lady's room. Now, Roger, you and Dick move out the chests from the place where Langan says he put them. Take them down to the terrace; but set some one to watch them. Hark! there is something fallen within."

"The great case of books, my lord, by the sound," said one of the men.

"Now give me an axe," cried the young nobleman, and with a few blows he dashed the lock off the door, and pushed it open, bidding the men throw in the water as he did so.

Out burst the flames and smoke, however, as soon as the obstruction was removed, with such fury, that all were forced to run back; and as it somewhat cleared away, the frightful scene of destruction that the interior of the tower displayed too plainly showed that there was no possibility left of saving that part of the building.

"Now, my good men," cried the young lord, "let as many as can find buckets keep pouring on the water. The others help me to cut away the woodwork between the tower and the rest. Some of you run up to the corridor above, break down the panelling, and throw it back away from the flames. Fear not, but at all risks cut off the tower from the rest of the house. Call some of those men up from below. Why do they stand idle there?"

The scene of hurry and confusion that succeeded can be imagined by those who have witnessed the consternation produced by a fire in a rural district, where few of those means and appliances which in great towns exist in plenty, but often are found ineffectual even there, are to be met with at all. To prevent the flames from extending to the rest of that wing was found impossible, notwithstanding all the efforts of the noble master of the mansion, and the strenuous exertions of his servants, who speedily recovered from the first confusion of surprise, and recollected the old military habits which they had acquired in former days. The tenantry, too, who flocked up at the sound of the alarum-bell, gave eager but not very efficient help, as well as a number of the townsfolk; but still the fire gained ground, extended from the tower to the rooms in the wing, ran along the cornices, caught the beams, and threatened the whole building with destruction, when a tall, grave stranger in a black cloak and hat walked calmly up to Lord Walton, who had come down to the terrace to give directions to the people below, and said in a low tone,—

"A few pounds of gunpowder, my lord, and a linen bag laid above that doorway and under the coping-stone, will separate the fire from the building. The stone passage cuts it off below; there is but a narrow gallery above, and if you can but break up the corridor—"

"I see! I see!" cried Lord Walton. "Thanks, sir, thanks. Run, Hugh, to the armoury; you will find some powder there."

"I beg, sir, that I may be permitted to make the *saucisson*," cried a tall man in flaunting apparel. "At the celebrated siege of Rochelle I constructed the famous petard wherewith we blew in the—"

"I thank you, sir," replied the master of the mansion, looking at the person who addressed him from head to foot with a quick but marking gaze; "I will make it myself;" and without further notice he proceeded to give the necessary orders, and to take precautions both to ensure the safety of all persons near and to guard the building as much as possible from damage by the explosion.

When all was ready, he went into the house to bring his sister forth, lest by any chance the rooms in which she had hitherto remained should be shaken more than he expected; and then, after having placed her at a distance, he himself fired the train, which, being unconfined, except at one part, carried the flame in an instant to the bag of powder, causing it to explode with a tremendous roar. A quantity of brickwork was thrown into the air; the gallery above fell in the moment after; and then, after a short pause, a tall neighbouring tower, between the place where the powder had taken effect and that where the fire was raging, bulged out

about half-way up, and then crashed down, strewing the terrace with a mass of broken ruins.

In the anxiety and excitement of the moment, Lord Walton had observed little but what was passing immediately before him; but as he marked the effect, and was turning round to look for his sister, in order to tell her that the rest of the mansion was saved, the stranger in black, who had spoken to him before, once more addressed him in a low voice, saying,—

"You had better look to those chests, my lord; Colonel Thistleton is eyeing them somewhat curiously. As for me, I will wish you good-night; I love not the neighbourhood of parliamentary commissioners; but if you want good help at need, which perhaps may be the case soon, you have only to send a trusty servant to inquire for Martin Randal at Waterbourne, ten miles hence, and you will have fifty troopers with you in two hours."

"I understand, I understand, major!" replied Lord Walton. "God speed you with my best thanks. Colonel Thistleton! What came he here for?"

"No good," replied Randal, walking away, and beckoning to his tall companion, who followed him with a pompous stride, while Lord Walton turned towards the spot to which he had directed his attention. He there perceived, for the first time, three men on horseback, and one who had dismounted and was speaking with a servant who had been placed to watch the two large chests of papers which had been removed from the wing of the building.

As Lord Walton gazed at him, he stooped down once more to look at the chests with a curious and inquiring eye; and, striding up to him at once, the young nobleman demanded, in a stern tone,—

"Who are you, sir? and what do you want with those cases?"

"My name, my lord, is Thistleton," replied the other; "a poor colonel, by the permission of Providence, in the service of the Parliament of England; and when matters are a little more composed I will inform your lordship, as my errand is with you, what excited my curiosity in regard to these cumbrous packages."

"Oh, Colonel Thistleton! That is a different affair," answered Lord Walton. "As soon as I have ascertained that all further danger of the fire spreading is past, I will have the honour of entertaining you as far as my poor house, half destroyed as it is, will admit."

The parliamentary colonel bowed gravely, and the young nobleman then proceeded to give further directions to his people, mingling with commands respecting the fire and the security of the rest of the mansion sundry orders spoken in a low tone to those servants on whom he could most rely, and to some of his principal tenants.

When he had assured himself that all was safe, and had set a watch, he returned to his sister's side, and led her back to the house, whispering as he went,—

"Keep two of your maids with you in your chamber to-night, Annie. See to poor Arrah Neil; and at dawn to-morrow, dear girl, make preparations for a journey. Ask no questions, sweet sister, but pack up all that you most value —all trinkets, jewels, gold, and silver, for we may perhaps have to go far."

Annie Walton gazed at him with a look of sorrowful, half-bewildered inquiry; but he added, "I cannot explain now, dear one; I will tell you more to-morrow;" and she followed him silently into the house, where he left her, and at once went back to show as much courtesy to Colonel Thistleton and his companions as the feelings of his heart would permit.

CHAPTER V.

"This is a lamentable and very sad visitation, my lord," said Colonel Thistleton, as soon as he was seated with two companions in the large room we have before described.

"It is indeed, colonel," replied Lord Walton, "and will cost me at least ten thousand pounds to repair; so that I hope you have not come for anything like a benevolence, such as our kings of old used sometimes to levy upon their subjects, for I could ill spare one to the honourable house just now. Langan," he continued to the servant who appeared at the door, "have wine and meat set out in the hall. We shall all want refreshment."

"No, my lord," replied Colonel Thistleton, with some degree of hesitation; "the Houses of Parliament resort to no illegal and unjustifiable acts of taxation. Labouring but for the defence of themselves, of the king's person, and the liberty and laws of the kingdom, they take care to abide by the true rights and customs of the country; but at the same time, my lord, they think it but proper and necessary, as well for the safety of the State as for the exculpation of persons unjustly accused, to inquire into and examine, either by the judges appointed by law or by a committee of their own body, where any highly honourable and devout person is subjected to calumny, into all charges of resistance to the authority of the two houses, or of conspiracy for the purpose of levying war and further endangering the condition of the poor distracted realm."

The colour somewhat increased in Lord Walton's cheek, but without pause he replied gravely,—

"They are quite right, sir; and if, as I gather from what you say, you are come into this part of the country upon such an errand, you will find me very ready and willing to give you every assistance in my power."

Now the commission Colonel Thistleton had to perform was of a nature somewhat delicate; for the demeanour of the Walton family, at the first resistance shown to the arbitrary proceedings of the court, had been favourable to the views of general freedom, which were then alone

apparent on the side of the Parliament; and though it had become evident that the young lord had grown cold as they stretched their pretensions, and had even remonstrated against several of their proceedings, yet his course had not been so decided as to cut off all hope of attaching him to the party favourable to resistance of the royal authority by arms, while the task that the worthy committee-man was charged to execute was one likely to alienate him for ever, if the grounds for suspicion were found unreasonable. However, he was a skilful man, ever ready to take advantage of opportunity, and he therefore replied,—

"I was quite sure, my lord, that we should find every readiness in your lordship. We have, indeed, the unpleasant duty to perform (which I trust we shall do discreetly) of investigating charges against a number of persons in this country; but, as it is advisable that those in whose affection and loyalty we have the utmost confidence should set an example to others against whom there is just cause of suspicion, it is as well that I should inform your lordship that not long since, at Chippenham, a false and calumnious accusation was made against you to our worthy brother, Dr. Bastwick, here present—"

"Of which I do not credit a word," added the doctor.

"Charging you with countenancing the cruel preparations for war made by the king against his loyal subjects, and with having entered into correspondence with his majesty, and received a commission under his hand to levy horse against the honourable houses."

He paused, as if for a reply, and Lord Walton, with a frowning brow and flushed cheek, answered,—

"So, sir, I am to suppose, in short, that you have come hither to examine my house, and search for the correspondence you speak of?"

"Exactly, sir," replied a less prudent member of the committee, named Batten; but Thistleton cut him short by adding, "We are perfectly sure that your lordship, whose family have always been godly and well-disposed, would rejoice at an opportunity of showing the world how readily you would submit to the authority of Parliament, and clear yourself of all false and unjust reproaches."

"Should such reproaches against a person of such character be listened to for a moment?" asked the young nobleman; "and on my word, gentlemen," he added, "you are somewhat bold men to venture on the task."

"Not so bold as you give us credit for, my lord," replied Batten, taking once more the reply out of Thistleton's mouth; "there is a troop of horse under your park wall."

"Then it seems," rejoined Lord Walton, "that you did not really calculate upon such unresisting submission as you affected to expect at first. I must, of course, yield to force. However," he continued with a smile, "I am certainly not prepared to resist, even if I were willing."

"That want of preparation shows your lordship to be innocent," answered the cautious Thistleton,—"a point upon which I have no doubt. It was judged necessary to institute inquiries into all cases of malignant resistance to the authority of Parliament in this country; and it was to meet any opposition in such instances that the troop of horse was sent, not against your lordship, of whose conduct we are quite sure, though we thought it would show unrighteous partiality if we did not in some way notice the charges made against you—"

"Charges made upon oath, be it remarked," said Dr. Bastwick.

"Well, gentlemen," rejoined Lord Walton, "it is useless to discuss this question further. I will even take it for granted that you have due warrant for your proceeding, and merely ask what you intend to do next?"

"Why, the fact is this, my very good lord," replied Thistleton; "the information stated that we should find the papers in question in the west tower, in a chamber used by your lordship as a cabinet or writing-room, on the first floor from the ground. Now, I was informed but now that two large chests which I saw on the terrace without contained writings of value, which had just been removed from the fire. It would be satisfactory to us to look into those cases."

"Surely not to-night?" said the young nobleman.

"I think it would be expedient," said Thistleton.

"It would prevent evil surmises," added Bastwick.

"No time like the present," cried Batten. "The king's commission might be gone before to-morrow."

"The keys, I fear, have been lost in the fire," answered Lord Walton, giving him a look of contempt.

"They will easily be broken open," replied Batten.

"I may not exactly like to have all my papers left open to the world," said the young nobleman gravely; "but, having now clearly ascertained how far the suspicions of the Parliament really go, I will make no further objection. But I give you all notice that I protest against this act; and that, when next I take my place amongst the peers of England, I will move for an inquiry into the whole proceeding. Without there! bring in those cases of papers, and some instrument for forcing open the locks." Thus saying, he rose, and, turning to the window, looked out upon the terrace, which was still partially illuminated by the fitful glare of the decaying fire in the tower.

In a few minutes four stout servants appeared, carrying in the chests, and, having received orders to break them open, soon laid the contents bare before the eager eyes of the parliamentary commissioners. Great, however, was their disappointment to perceive nothing on the top but old deeds and parchments, with many a waxen

seal pendent from its broad ribbon. They were not so easily satisfied, however, and proceeded to turn out the whole contents, strewing the floor of the saloon with yellow papers, while Lord Walton spoke a few words to Langan, who left the room.

"Well, gentlemen, are you satisfied?" asked the young nobleman at length, when the bottom of each case was laid bare. "If so, the servants shall replace the papers, and we will to supper."

The committee whispered together for a moment ere they replied, but Lord Walton could catch the words, "No, no! not now. To-morrow at daybreak. There has evidently been no preparation. Have up the troop by that time," and other broken sentences, which evidently showed him that further proceedings were in contemplation.

"We will, my lord, put off any further perquisitions till to-morrow," Colonel Thistleton replied at length, "upon your lordship pledging us your word of honour that you will not leave the house nor send out of it any paper of any kind or sort whatever."

"I shall most assuredly leave the house," replied Lord Walton, "for I am going in five minutes to assure myself that the fire will spread no farther, but if you mean that I am not to absent myself, I have no intention of so doing, and will promise to stay and entertain my unexpected guests as befits their quality and commission; nor will I send hence or make away with any paper, from the warrant of array directed by Henry II. to my ancestor, down to the cellar-book of the old butler. So now, sirs, to supper; and let us forget for the time all that is unpleasant in our meeting. The day will come, and that before the world is a week older, when I will deal with this matter in the proper place and in the proper manner."

"Be that as you please, my lord," replied Thistleton; "we doubt not we shall be justified. Myself and Dr. Bastwick will in the meantime gladly accept your hospitality. Captain Batten, however, may be wanted with his troop."

"Nay," cried the young lord, "it were a pity to deprive yourselves of one of your most able and active members. If Captain Batten have any orders to give, he can send them in writing. There lie paper and pens, and I remarked that he had a trooper without. My wine is good, gentlemen, and venison is yet in season."

"It will do as well to write," said Batten, who, always ready to take his part in all that was unpleasant, was not without inclination to share in things more agreeable; and, proceeding to the writing-table in the window, he had soon concocted a hasty note, which he carried out himself, while the rest, with the owner of the mansion, proceeded to the eating-hall.

When the meal was over—and the commissioners did not spare it—Lord Walton ordered them to be conducted to the rooms prepared for them, and took leave, saying, "To-morrow, gentlemen, at five, if you please, we will proceed to further business. In the meanwhile, good-night."

The beds were soft and downy, the guests of Lord Walton tired with the fatigues of the preceding day, and it was somewhat later than the hour appointed when the members of the committee rose; and then, on looking forth from his window, Captain Batten was surprised and disappointed not to see his troop of horse drawn up in the park, as he had ordered them to muster there by half-past four. His two companions were down before him, and he found them, with the noble owner of the mansion, in the hall. Lord Walton immediately signified in a grave tone that it would be better to proceed on their search; but the task was sooner begun than ended, for Bishop's Merton House, even in its dismembered state, was not easily examined from one end to the other. Room after room was ransacked, every article of furniture which could be supposed to conceal papers was subjected to the perquisitions of the three commissioners; and it must be recollected that, in those days, people had not multiplied the luxuries and conveniences of life to such a degree as scarcely to be able to turn amidst the crowd of superfluities. Still nothing was discovered; for Lord Walton, though young, was a man of regular habits, and his papers were not all scattered over his dwelling, but gathered regularly into one repository.

At length Colonel Thistleton, after having twice passed through the corridor and gallery, pointed to a door in the former, saying, "We have omitted that room several times, my lord. It may be necessary that we examine there, merely for the sake of making our task complete. You will understand me clearly, my most honourable friend, that I am perfectly satisfied, and indeed was so from the first; but we must be enabled to say that we have not left any part of the mansion unseen."

The young nobleman heard him to the end, and then replied gravely,—

"Those are my sister's apartments, sir."

"Nevertheless, my lord—" answered Dr. Bastwick.

But Lord Walton cut him short, with a frowning brow and a flushed cheek.

"There is no 'nevertheless,' sir," he said. "Those are my sister's apartments—that is enough. Let me see the man that dares wag a foot towards them."

"Nay, my good lord," cried Thistleton in a mild and deprecating tone, "we mean no offence. If the lady sleep, we can wait her awaking. We need not go in now."

"Neither now nor ever, sir," answered the young nobleman sternly. "There are no papers of mine there; of that I pledge my honour. If that satisfies you, well."

"But it does not, sir," cried Batten.

"Then that is well also," answered Lord Walton, turning away with a look of scorn.

Thistleton spoke a word to his two companions, and then followed the young nobleman, exclaiming,—

"My lord, my lord!"

"You speak loud, sir," rejoined Charles

Walton, walking on. "I will hear you in the hall. Remember there are people who can sleep despite of parliamentary committees."

"This is too insolent," whispered Batten. "If you arrest him not, Master Thistleton, I will."

"Leave him to me," answered the colonel gravely. "A committee of the house must not be bearded by the best man in the realm. Leave him to me;" and, thus saying, he followed the young lord down the stairs.

When they were in the hall, in which were several servants, Lord Walton paused in the midst.

"Now, gentlemen," he said "what are your further commands?"

"I have but to ask, my lord," demanded Thistleton, "whether you are disposed to resist the lawful authority of Parliament?"

"The unlawful exercise of authority it does not possess, you mean," replied the peer. "But, not to cavil at words, sir,—if I say I am, what then?"

"Why, then I should be obliged to do that which would be most unpleasant to me," replied Colonel Thistleton.

"I rather think, however, that such must be the result, sir," rejoined Charles Walton, with a cold and indifferent air.

"I mean, sir, that I shall be compelled to put you under some restraint," said Thistleton, with an angry brow, "which must certainly be done if—"

"If I permit you," added Lord Walton, seeing that he paused. "Colonel Thistleton, you are mistaken," he continued, advancing towards him. "I arrest you, sir, for high treason, in the king's name! Give up your sword!" and he laid his hand firmly on his shoulder.

Dr. Bastwick shrank back, and looked towards the door; and, while the colour died away in Batten's cheek, Thistleton shook off the young lord's grasp, exclaiming,—

"Call up the horse from the window, Batten," and as he spoke he drew his blade.

"They are not there," answered Batten, with shaking knees.

"No, sir, they are not there," rejoined the master of the mansion; "those that are left of them are now galloping hard to escape Major Randal's keen riders. You may have heard of his name, sir; and it would be well to put up your weapon and submit to what cannot be avoided. Call in a party, Langan!"

"Well, my lord," cried Thistleton, thrusting back his sword into the scabbard, "this is a most shameless breach of—"

"Of what, sir?" demanded Lord Walton. "You came hither upon an unsavoury errand. You have attempted to cozen me from the beginning. Without lawful power or authority you have infringed upon the rights of an Englishman; and I told you that I would stay here to deal with my unexpected guests as befitted their quality and commission. But mark me, Colonel Thistleton: had you been moderate and wise—had you carried on your search with decency—you should have gone from this house without hindrance or molestation. I would have remembered that I had given the Parliament no greater intimation of my intentions than they have given me, and treated you with civility and respect; but you have exceeded all propriety: you have pried where no likelihood existed of finding what you sought; you have even expressed the purpose of intruding on the privacy of my sister's chamber. The measure is full, gentlemen, and it is now too late. You are all three prisoners under arrest; and it will be for his majesty to determine the full extent of your deserts. You see it is in vain to resist," he added, pointing to the door, where stood a party of soldiers fully armed. "Take them back to their chambers, Langan; suffer no communication between them; place a sentry at each door, and then return to me."

The members of the committee looked ruefully in each other's faces; but they well saw that what the young nobleman said was but too true, regarding the uselessness of remonstrance or opposition, and with bent heads and dejected countenances they were led away.

CHAPTER VI.

"Now, Roger Hartup," said the young lord, as soon as the deputies were gone, "tell me more of this news. You were with the party, it seems."

"Why, yes, my lord," replied a tall, long-boned Wiltshire man, dressed in the full colours of the house of Walton, with broadsword by his side and pistols in his belt; "Langan took me with him without saying a word of where he was going. He told me afterwards that he was obliged to come back for fear your lordship should need him, and that I was to stay with the major and his troop, because I knew all the lanes and byways, and, moreover, loved playing with hand and arm."

"It was well bethought," said his master; "they might need a guide."

"I don't know, my lord," replied the servant; "but the captain of the troop seemed to know all the hedgerows as if he had been born among them. But as soon as Major Randal had heard Langan's message, he gave the order to muster and be ready in an hour. That was about half-past one, my lord, for we had scattered the pebbles about as we went, I warrant, and before half-past two the troop were in their saddles, and moving down at a brisk trot by Lumley Lane, and then at a canter over the common. That brought us to Hill Down, where all the folks were asleep, and then we had three miles of high-road to Rushford. As we were crossing the brook, or rather letting the horses drink, for the major had a care to the beasts' mouths, it being a hot night, we

heard a trumpet sound Bishop's Merton way; so then he gave the order to trot, and taking the cart-road we came upon the edge of the meadows, where we could see the road up to the house and yet have shelter of the alders; and there we sat quite still till we saw the Roundhead rascals coming up at a walk, with a sort of animal at their head more like a chandler than a soldier, and beside him Dry of Longsoaken, on his grey mare. When they got out clear upon the meadow, old Dry pointed along towards the bottom and said something—we could not hear what he said, but it was like as if he told them, 'If you keep down that way, you'll get up to the house without being seen from the windows.' The major spoke never a word. Indeed, he spoke very little all the time, but let them go on till—"

"Was Dry still with them?" asked his master, interrupting his discourse.

"Lord bless your lordship, no!" answered the servant; "he left them as soon as he had pointed out the way, and trotted back. But when they were half across the meadows, about half a gun-shot from the alders, a trumpeter's horse of ours smelt them out, and, like an undrilled beast, thinking his master was somewhat long in sounding the charge, he began and neighed as loud as he could. Thereupon they halted, and began to look about, as if a horse neighing was somewhat wonderful; then the major gave the word, and we were out from the alders in a minute, and down upon them. You lordship has seen a plump of teal rise up from a pond and whirl away all in a sweep. Well, four-fifths of them were round in a minute, and longest legs won the day. About twenty old fellows, with copper noses and steel caps, stood their ground, however, and fired their pistols at us, keeping all together, and showing broadsword. But we took to steel too, and they could not bide it, but broke; and though they fought better than I ever thought to see such crop-eared hounds fight, they were forced to follow their fellows, though not before some seven had tasted green turf, and had as much of it as will serve them till the world's end. Then we wheeled and followed the rest, cutting them off from the town; and, though they rode hard, yet more than nine or ten had cause to wish their spurs were better, till at length, after having chased them back to Rushford, the major sent our captain, Barecolt, with thirty men, to keep them going while he halted, and gave me ten to bring here, saying your lordship might need them."

"Then, did Dry of Longsoaken fly with them?" demanded his lord; "or did he run back to the town?"

"I doubt that he knew of the affair at all, my lord," replied the man; "he was far down the lane before we charged. No trumpet was blown for fear of bringing the militia men from Bishop's Merton upon us, and the banks would prevent him from seeing or hearing either."

"Then we will strike a blow at him," said Lord Walton.

The servant rubbed his hands and laughed. "That will rejoice the cockles of many a poor man's heart in Bishop's Merton," he cried. "The old sanctified sinner is hated as much as he is feared. Why, he was the cause of poor old Sergeant Neil being dragged away, and killed with bad usage; and I do believe the boys would stone him on the green if they knew it, for he—the old man—used to gather the lads about him on the green and tell them stories of the old wars, when Tyrone was a rebel in Ireland, and he fought under Blount, Earl of Devon, till their little eyes almost came out of their heads."

"Dry was the cause, did you say?" asked the young nobleman. "I thought the only cause was found in the words he spoke—that the king, if he were well counselled, would call William of Orange to his aid, would raise his standard at once, march to London, proclaim martial law, and hang the two ringleaders of the Parliament before the door of the house."

"Ay, my lord, that was the pretence," replied the servant, "though he never said all that; and they pretended, too, he knew more of what was going on in the north, if he chose to speak. But the real reason was that the old man, one day last year, when he was stronger than he was afterwards, heard the sneaking villain saying things to poor little Arrah that were not comely, and broke his head with his staff. Dry stomached the affront till the time came for his revenge, and then brought the men over from Devizes to take old Neil away; so I am right glad your lordship is going to punish him on that account."

"'Tis not on that account, Roger Hartup," replied his master gravely, "for of that I know nothing; but first, the man is a rank traitor, as there is proof enough; and secondly, I am convinced that this fire last night was not kindled without help. There were men seen about the place just after dark. Dry was up here upon a false pretence in the morning; and no one was near the west tower with a light. Bring me the paper and ink, and call the lance-prisade of the troop who came with the men."

He wrote a few hasty lines while the servant was gone; and on his return with a stout, broad-set soldier, the young nobleman said, "Now, sir, do you think that Major Randal will object to your executing a warrant under my hand for the arrest of a rank traitor in the neighbourhood?"

"I was ordered to receive your commands, my lord, and obey them," replied the soldier. "But the major told me to beg your lordship to let him know early what you intended to do, for that he did not hold it safe to remain here much after noon, for fear of being cut off."

"I will send to him directly," replied Lord Walton; "but you, in the meantime, take this warrant, and go round by the back of the town to a place called Longsoaken, where you will

apprehend one Ezekiel Dry. Bring him hither without giving him time to speak with any one in private."

"But if he resists?" asked the man.

"Use force," answered Lord Walton, and then added, "but there will be no resistance. Take all your men with you but those who are guarding the committee men, and five of my people besides. You, Roger, go with him, with Hugh and three others. Leave Langan, for I shall want him; and now," he continued, as soon as they had retired, "to examine into the business of this fire."

Thus saying, he rose, took his hat, which lay beside him, and, passing through the neighbouring hall, went out upon the terrace. Then, circling round the ruins of the tower which had fallen, he made his way to the end, where, black and still reeking, stood the part of the building in which the fire had commenced.

No one was near, and Lord Walton stood and gazed at the ruin for several minutes with sad and solemn feelings. It looked to him like the corpse of one untimely slain; all was grey and desolate where lately had been life and cheerfulness. The room in which he used to sit was gone, and all that marked the spot where he had passed many an hour of calm and pleasant contemplation were the charred ends of the rafters, and one stout beam, which, not quite destroyed, hung black and crumbling from side to side, bending down half broken in the midst. Part of the wall had fallen in, and part still stood, rugged and ruined, while in the chamber below some tattered fragments of rich damask furniture and old tapestry hung fluttering in the wind. The smoke still rose up from the pile of rubbish beneath; but on one of the chimneys a bird had already ventured to perch, as if claiming it thenceforth for the inheritance of the wild things of the earth.

After a few minutes' sad contemplation the young lord turned and looked around over the fair scene he was about to leave, perhaps for ever, as it lay calm and smiling in the sunshine of the early morning, notwithstanding all the destruction of the preceding night, and the gloomy prospects of the future, with the same peaceful indifference wherewith some have supposed the disembodied spirit to look upon the wild passions and contentions of the world.

As he gazed, however, he saw the figure of a girl seated upon the trunk of a felled beech-tree, which lay close beneath the terrace, and instantly perceiving that it was that of Arrah Neil, he beckoned to her to come up to him. The girl did so without hesitation; and as she climbed the stone steps which led from the park he watched her countenance to see if the moody and abstracted fit to which she was frequently subject was still upon her, or had passed away.

There was no trace of it left. Her beautiful eyes were clear and bright and full of intelligence, though her brow was grave and even sad, and her look was raised towards him with a gentle, imploring, deprecating expression, as if she had in some way offended and sought forgiveness.

"Well, my poor Arrah," said the young nobleman in a kind tone, "I fear you were much frightened last night."

"I was frightened, my lord," she answered, bending down her eyes, "but not much; I knew it was for the best, and hoped that it would soon be extinguished."

"All things are for the best," replied Lord Walton. "God forbid that I should doubt it, Arrah! Yet this has been a severe loss and a great grief to me; for I cannot see the house of my fathers so injured without regret. It is not that many invaluable and rare things have been destroyed, but that mementoes of the past are gone with them—things the sight of which recalled the days of boyhood—places stored with a thousand memories, ay, and a thousand associations with times before my own. I can no longer sit in that room, Arrah, and think of those who tenanted it in former years, or of all the many scenes that have there taken place."

"I am very sorry for it indeed," replied Arrah Neil; "but yet—" and she paused, leaving her sentence unconcluded.

"Tell me, Arrah," continued Lord Walton, not heeding her broken reply, "when you had retired to rest last night, which they tell me was about nine, did you hear any noise in the tower, or any one going up the stairs which pass close behind the room where you slept?"

She gazed at him for a moment in silence, with her large bright eyes fixed somewhat sadly upon his countenance, then shook her head and answered, "No one."

The young lord remarked the peculiarity of her look, and added, "I am sure you would answer truly, Arrah, for your poor grandfather, who gave you an education so much above that which persons far higher in rank bestow upon their children, taught you, I know, always to adhere to truth. Yet hear me, Arrah; I have always tried to be kind to you and yours; I have been fond of you from your childhood. Now I suspect that this fire was not the work of accident. I cannot find that the door at the foot of the tower was closed last night. That enemies were abroad I have too good reason to know; and you, too, warned me yourself that danger was at hand—"

"Oh, but it was not that!—it was not that!" cried Arrah Neil; "the danger I feared for you was not of fire, Charles Walton. Ask me not to tell you, for they made me swear I would not before they would let me go."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the young nobleman, gazing at her thoughtfully. "Well, I will not ask you then."

"Do not! do not!" she cried; "for I could not refuse you anything; and that would be wrong after I have sworn. I would lay down my life for you, indeed I would; but you would not wish me to break my word."

"No, no!" replied Lord Walton; "but to

return. I suspect, as I have said, that this destruction has not been committed by accident."

"Not entirely," said Arrah Neil, looking down.

"Not entirely!" exclaimed the peer. "Then you know how it happened—you know who did it! Arrah, speak, who was it? That, at least, I may ask."

The poor girl trembled terribly, but then, in a low sad voice she answered, "It was I."

"You!—you!" cried Lord Walton, gazing at her sternly, while his lip quivered in the attempt to suppress the emotions within him. The girl answered nothing, and after a struggle with himself he waved his hand, saying, "I forgive you, my poor girl; you did it when you were not yourself. Tell no one else, Arrah—the secret is safe with me;" and he turned away, lest one harsh word should mingle with the kinder ones he had spoken.

When he had gone some ten or twelve paces, however, Arrah Neil darted after him, caught his hand, and pressed her beautiful lips upon it.

"Do not abandon me, Charles Walton," she said. "Do not cast me off and hate me. Tell me, would you rather see all those ruins, and lose all you have lost, or be to-morrow a prisoner in the dark Tower of London, perhaps never to ride the green fields again while you live?"

Lord Walton paused with a look of bewildered inquiry; but then suddenly a light rose up in his eyes, and, laying his hand upon Arrah Neil's shoulder, he said, "Thank you, Arrah, thank you. 'Tis a wild way of deliverance. Yet thank you, dear child. You meant it well, and it has succeeded. But here are people coming. Go back to Annie; we must not leave you behind us."

CHAPTER VII.

The seasons of the year seemed to take their tone from the spirit of the times and the discord that was raging throughout the land. The summer was gloomy and full of storms. Instead of bright sunshine and smiling skies, heavy clouds had been gathering over the heavens from the beginning of the year; and although every now and then a warm and splendid day, such as that which we have described in the beginning of this tale, broke in upon the heavy aspect of the summer, as if to remind man of fairer and happier times, yet week after week passed in tempests, rain, and gloom; and signs and portents, such as might have alarmed nations in more superstitious days, were seen in the sky, and filled the hearts of the more timid with apprehension.

It was upon the morning of one of these sad and frowning days that a troop of horse, consisting of about a hundred and fifty men, well armed and mounted, took its way across a wide and somewhat barren plain, about forty miles to the north-east of Bishop's Merton, encumbered with a good deal of baggage, and escorting two or three of the heavy carriages of the times, in which were some six or seven women. The prospect was wide and dreary, extending in a number of grey lines which afforded the eye no pleasing object to rest upon, except here and there a little mound or tumulus bearing on its top a clump of black-looking trees. In the distance was a range of low wood, apparently stunted and withered by the chilling blasts which swept over the plain; and a piece of water of some extent was seen glistening on the right, with the sandy road, along which the cavalcade took its way, winding between the mere and the wood. No hedgerows broke the wide extent, and the ground appeared to be somewhat marshy, for numerous ditches intersected it in every direction, and a large trench ran along on either side of the path, with here and there a small wooden bridge to cross from the sandy highway to the green turf of the plain.

The progress of the party was not very quick, for, as we have said, the carriages were heavy, and their wheels, as well as those of the two or three carts and waggons, sank deep in the loose and shifting soil of the road. By the side of the foremost of the carriages generally rode a cavalier, with whom the reader is already acquainted under the name of Lord Walton, and ever and anon he laid his hand upon the heavy door, and spoke in at the window to his sister or to Arrah Neil, the latter seldom replying except by a monosyllable or a look. Annie Walton, however, conversed with him gaily and lightly; not that her heart was by any means at ease, or her bosom without its apprehensions; but she was well aware that her brother was grieved for all the inconvenience that she suffered and for the danger to which she was exposed; and, with kindly and generous feeling towards him, she made as little as possible of every annoyance on the march, concealed all the fears that she might experience, and seemed unconscious of the perils of the way. She might not, it is true, deceive her brother as to her own sensations, for he knew her well, and understood her kindness and devotion; but still it made the burden lighter to him to hear no murmur and to witness no terror.

From time to time, during the march of the two preceding days, some of the rumours which, true and false alike, always run through a country in a state of agitation, had reached Lord Walton's party, speaking of troops marching hither and thither in the neighbourhood. Now it was a detachment from Lord Essex's army; now it was a body of men crossing the country to reinforce Waller; now it was a body of militia called out by parliamentary commissioners from the district or the county through which they were passing. But Lord Walton paid little attention to these reports, having taken every necessary precaution, by throwing out several small parties in front, at the distance

of about two or three miles, to guard against surprise, and secure his onward course towards Coventry.

When any rumour reached him, indeed, which bore more strongly the semblance of truth than the rest, and was corroborated by his own knowledge of the position and designs of the various persons to whom it referred, he would ride forward to the head of the line, and converse for a few minutes with a thin, bony, grave-looking personage in black, who bore few signs of being a military man, except his large boots of untanned leather, his heavy steel-mounted sword, and the pistols at his saddle-bow. Thus, when they had got about half way across the plain, and a horseman galloped up from the right, leaping one or two narrow ditches by which it was intersected, and then, not able to cross the wider trench which separated the road from the turf, riding along by the side of the troop, and making signs to Charles Walton that he had something to communicate, the young nobleman accordingly reined in his horse, and, suffering his party to pass on, lingered behind till they were out of ear-shot.

"Well, Master Hurst," he then asked, "what is your news? I was sorry you would not join us; but I am glad to see you here."

"I told Langan I would follow you, my lord," replied the new-comer; "but I had to put my house in order, and sell some hay, for it does not do to go soldiering in these times without money in one's pocket, and I had but short notice. However, my lord, you had better be on your guard; for, as I came over the moor, I found a boy keeping sheep out there between the wood and the water, and, wishing to know whereabouts you were, for I could not see you at that time—"

"You did not mention my name, I hope," said Lord Walton.

"Oh no, my lord," answered the horseman; "I took care not to do that: I only asked if he had seen a body of soldiers, without saying horse or foot. So the boy said, 'Oh yes; that there were five hundred and fifty lying behind the wood,' for he had counted them, seemingly —like a flock of sheep. Then I asked him how many horse there were; to which he replied by saying, 'Two,' and that all the rest had guns and bandoliers and steel caps, except a few, who had long pikes in their hands."

"This seems serious," replied Lord Walton; "we must look to this intelligence."

"There is more serious work behind, my lord," replied Hurst; "for this news gave me the key to what I saw myself in the morning. These musketeers are not alone. They have got cavalry for their support, my lord, or I am much mistaken: not two hours ago I saw the tail of a troop going into the little village, the spire of which you can just see rising up there. I should have taken them for your men but that they were coming the contrary road; so I avoided the village for fear of worse."

"Well, Hurst, ride on to the next bridge," said Lord Walton, "and then join me on the road with Major Randal, whom I must consult on our proceedings."

Thus saying, he spurred on his horse, and galloped forward to the head of the line, where, pulling up by the side of our spare friend in black, he communicated to him all that he had just heard.

"Ah!" said Randal in his usual dry and deliberate tone,—"ah! Five hundred and fifty musketeers—rather better than three to one. That would not matter if the ground were fair; but these ditches, these ditches! they are awkward things in the way of cavalry; if our horses could leap them as easily as their shot, the matter would soon be settled. Does any one know what like the ground is like there? They will gall us sadly if we have to expose our flank to the wood."

"I fear so, indeed," replied Lord Walton; "but perhaps, if I were to pass the next bridge, take a circuit round and dislodge them, while you pursue your way along the road, we might contrive to get into better fighting ground."

"Let us see what like it is first," said Randal. "Here comes your newsmonger, my lord; we shall learn more from him. Now, master yeoman, how does the land lie about the wood? is there good room for a charge, or is it cut up like this?"

"Between the wood and the road," answered Hurst, "it is just like a gridiron, with ditches enough to drain the sea."

"And behind the wood, do you know anything of that?" continued Randal.

"It is good enough there," said the horseman, divining the object of his question, "but you cannot get at it for the river."

"They have some good soldiers amongst them," said Randal. "Such ground was not chosen by one of the old bottle-nosed servingmen of London."

"They must have good intelligence too," said Lord Walton, "to fix so exactly on a point where they can best attack us. If it were not for my sister and the women, we might take their fire in passing, and get into the good ground beyond; but the carriages and baggage would prove a sad encumbrance."

"Ah, women, women!" cried Randal; "they are the causes of all the mischief in the world. However, we must dispose of them, and must take our resolution quickly; there is no going back now, my lord, and we must make our way forward at whatever risk. Luckily, you have brought all the spare horses and the women's saddles; they must quit the carriages and mount. As for the baggage, it must take its chance, and belong to the winners."

"But I cannot expose my sister," exclaimed Lord Walton, "to such an affair as this—she can go back to the village."

"No, no," said Randal quickly; "there is no need of that: this good yeoman can guide her round with the rest of the women, while we

make our way forward, and do the best that we can with these gentry in front. They will not chase her if we keep on our way; but if we quit the road, they will of course draw to their left and cut us off between the causeway and the water. Now, my lord, be quick; get them out and away: I will send a dozen of my men to escort them, with Barecolt at their head. 'Tis the best task for him; for, though he does not want courage, with women he will have room to talk, and that is his chief occupation. He may lie, too, there, as much as he likes, and nobody will find him out. Now, master yeoman, you be guide—lead these ladies over the moor, round by the back of that great pond, and into the open ground above it. When you get to that mound with the trees on it, you may halt a bit, and watch what we are about on the road. If you see that we get the worst, put to the spur, and gallop on till you rejoin the Coventry road, then on as fast as may be to the king, who will be in Coventry by noon to-morrow. If you see we make good our ground, come back and join us."

"But there are horse in that village, sir," answered Hurst.

"That can't be helped," replied Randal; "we have no other chance. Besides, they may be our people as well as the enemy's. Stay; it may be as well to see; I will send on Barecolt, while you halt on the hill. He can play either part—swear and swagger like the most licentious Cavalier, or cant and pule like the most starched Puritan."

While this conversation had been taking place, the party had not ceased to advance slowly along the road; but the order to halt was now given, and preparations were made for carrying into execution the plan decided upon. The carriages were stopped, Miss Walton and her attendants were placed hastily upon the spare horses which had been brought from Bishop's Merton, and the small body under Captain Barecolt were drawn out, and commanded to fall into the rear. Annie Walton did all that she was told to do without a word; but she looked in her brother's face, as he placed her on horseback, and, bending down her beautiful head, kissed his cheek, while a silent irrepressible tear rose in her eye.

"Do not fear, Annie, do not fear," said Charles Walton; "we will soon put these fellows to the rout."

But it is vain, in moments of danger and difficulty, to commend courage to those who, by fate or situation, are doomed to inactivity, for they must still feel for those that they love, if not for themselves; and though Miss Walton considered not for one moment the personal peril which she encountered, her heart beat with apprehensions for her brother, which no words could quiet or remove. Lord Walton then turned to Arrah Neil, who was already mounted, and, leaning his hand on the horse's neck, he asked, "Can you manage the horse, my poor Arrah? had you not better ride behind a trooper?"

"Oh no," she said; "no, I can ride quite well—I remember now;" and, indeed, the manner in which she held her rein, the ease and grace with which she sat the horse, and the command which she had over it, though a powerful and spirited animal, clearly showed that at some time she must have been well accustomed to such exercise.

Lord Walton looked down with a thoughtful expression of countenance, as if there were something that puzzled him. But just at that moment Major Randal rode up, exclaiming, "We must lose no more time, my lord; if we halt any longer here, they may see what we are about, and act accordingly. I shall order the troop to advance, for women are always slow, and they must come after us as they can, till they reach the little bridge up yonder. Let the carts and carriages come first, and the women can bring up the rear. Now, mark ye, Barecolt, follow this good yeoman, with the ladies under your charge, till you reach that little mound with the trees on the right. You can deliver your stomach by the way of any of the wild imaginations that may fret you; but when you get to the mound you must give up talking, and, riding on to the village alone, make use of your wits, if you have any left, to ascertain whether there be a troop of horse in it, and of what side."

"Alone?" said Barecolt.

"To be sure," answered Randal, with a laugh; "the man who preached in the morning at Rochelle, and defeated the Papists in the evening, who defended the pass in the Cevennes single-handed against a whole army, may well go on alone to reconnoitre a handful of cavalry. Besides, it will make you careful, Master Barecolt, when you know that your own life depends on your own tongue."

"It has often done that," answered Barecolt. "I remember, when I was in Spain, being attacked by some twenty banditti, and putting my back against a rock—"

"March!" cried Randal, interrupting him; "tell that to the girls. It will do to pass the time as well as any other lie;" and, riding on, he led the way, while Lord Walton continued by his sister's side, till, reaching the little bridge, the good farmer, Hurst, turned off from the road into the meadows, followed by the young lady, her servants, and the escort.

With anxious eyes Annie Walton and Arrah Neil watched the advance of the larger party of horse towards the wood before them, although neither of them had heard the exact cause of alarm, or was aware of where the danger was to be apprehended, or what was its nature. All they knew was, that peril lay upon the onward road; and, notwithstanding all the assiduities of Captain Barecolt, who, riding by their side wherever the space admitted it, endeavoured to entertain them with some of the monstrous fictions in which his imagination was accustomed to indulge, they listened not to his tales, they scarcely even heard his words, but, their eyes turned constantly to the road they had just quitted, pursued a path, forming with it an acute

angle, which led round the back of a large piece of water that lay gleaming before them.

Once or twice they had to dismount and lead their horses over the little wooden bridges which crossed the ditches intersecting the plain; and more than once, where these were so insecure as to give way under the horses' feet, they were forced to quit their direct line, and take a circuit. Nevertheless, as they cantered quickly over the turf between, they had reached the little tree-covered knoll which had been pointed out as their halting-place, before the troop which was pursuing the high road had arrived at the spot where the low wood we have mentioned skirted the way.

That wood did not, indeed, approach close to the road, but lay at the distance of from a hundred to a hundred and fifty yards on the left, extending parallel with it for nearly a quarter of a mile, and having a green meadow and the continuation of the broad trench we have mentioned between. A river of some width, flowing from the right, crossed the highway under a bridge of two arches, at a short distance from the wood; and at the moment that Miss Walton and her companions reached the mound, the head of her brother's troop was about three hundred yards from this bridge.

Knowing well that Major Randal was not a man to be trifled with, Captain Barecolt, as soon as they had arrived at the appointed place, took a flowery and ceremonious leave of Miss Walton, and rode on towards the village, of which they had now a better view than before. The young lady's eyes, however, were still fixed upon her brother's troop, as she remained half-way up the little mound, with her horse turned towards the road and her maids behind, Arrah Neil upon her left hand, and the small party of troopers a little in advance.

They had continued thus for some four or five minutes, in breathless expectation of what was to come next, when they perceived the troop brought to a sudden halt, and an apparent consultation take place at the head of the little column. At that moment Annie Walton heard one of the troopers just before her say aloud, "They have barricaded the bridge, that's clear enough."

"Good God!" she exclaimed; "what will they do?"

But the man, although he heard her words, only turned his head over his shoulder to give her a look, without making any reply.

"There is a little path, lady," said one of the maids, who, placed higher up the hill, saw more distinctly the ground beneath,—"there is a little path down from the side of the bridge into the meadows below; if they were to take that they could get out of the way of the wood, and I should think could cross the river, for it spreads out there so wide it must be shallow."

"They do not see it," said Annie Walton; "they do not see it for the bank."

Almost as she spoke, a considerable body of foot drew out from the wood, and a party of about a hundred men, running forward, drew up in line close to the bridge, and opened a fire of musketry upon the small troop of cavalry which occupied the road. Several horses at the head of the line were seen to plunge violently, and one fell with its rider. The next instant the whole were in motion, a charge was made upon the bridge, and for a few moments all was confusion and disarray, in which they could only see that the Cavaliers had recourse to their pistols, and were endeavouring apparently to force the barricade.

"Oh, the path, the path!" cried Annie Walton. "If any man will ride and tell them of the path, and that they can ford the river below, I will give him a hundred crowns."

One of the troopers was instantly dashing forward, but the man who had been left in command called him back, saying that they had been ordered to remain there, and must obey. By this time the charge had been repulsed, and the Cavaliers were retreating under a heavy fire in some disarray. They formed again with great rapidity, however, behind the waggons and carriages.

Miss Walton remonstrated against the recall of her messenger; but, without waiting to hear the reply, Arrah Neil exclaimed, "I will go, dear lady! I will go!" and, shaking her rein, she put the horse to its speed, and darted forward before any one could stop her.

"I will go too!" cried Annie Walton. "Why should she risk her life, and a sister fear?" and, thus saying, she struck her horse with a whip and followed. In a moment, without uttering a word, the stout yeoman, Hurst, was by the lady's side; but Arrah Neil outsped them both, and rode direct for the path she had observed. Without fear, without pause, the devoted girl rode on, although as soon as ever she was perceived from the bridge the shots began to drop around her, for her object was instantly divined, and no consideration for her sex restrained the soldiery.

"This way, lady, this way!" cried Hurst, turning to the left; "we can speak to them over the dyke, and we shall be farther from the fire."

They were now within a few hundred yards of Lord Walton's party, and he was seen at the head of the troop gesticulating vehemently to his sister to keep back.

"Ride away, my dear! ride away!" cried Hurst; "I will go on!" but at that moment a shot struck his charger, and horse and rider went down together. Miss Walton, however, rode forward, seeing the good yeoman struggling up; and Arrah Neil, too, pursued her way, reached the bridge, dashed up the path, entered the road, and, in the midst of all the fire, galloped on till, within ten yards of the carriages, a ball struck the animal in the haunches, and he reared violently with the pain. She still kept her seat, however, till Lord Walton, spurring forward, seized the bridle and caught her in his arms, just as the horse fell, and, struggling

in the agonies of death, rolled over into the dyke.

"Good God! what is it?" exclaimed Charles Walton, bearing her back behind the waggons. "Annie, Annie, ride away!" he shouted to his sister; "if you love me, ride away!"

"There is a path down by the bridge; the river is fordable below!" exclaimed Arrah Neil; "there are no dykes beyond the stream. All is clear on that side."

"Look, look, Charles!" cried Miss Walton, pointing with her hand; "there is a body of cavalry drawing out from the village, and some one riding at full speed towards our people on the hill."

"Friends, on my life!" cried Major Randal. "Now, fair aide-de-camp, gallop round there to the right, and keep out of fire. Tell your people to charge the Roundheads in the front, while those from the village take them on the flank, and we do the best we can on the right. What was that you said, pretty maid?" he continued, addressing Arrah Neil; "a path down by the bridge—the stream fordable?"

"Ride away, Annie! ride away!" cried Lord Walton; "more to the right! more to the right!"

"We must push forward the carriages and carts," said Major Randal; "they will give us some shelter. Where this girl came up, there can we go down."

"I saw the path quite clear," said one of the men.

But without more words the new plan proposed was immediately followed; the carts, drawn up two abreast, were pushed forward towards the bridge by the main strength of the dismounted troopers, for the horses had become unmanageable, and the traces had been cut; and under shelter of these and of the carriages, which formed a line on the left, the troop advanced in good order to the bridge, notwithstanding all the efforts of the musketeers.

In the meanwhile, Annie Walton took her way back towards the hill, beckoning to the yeoman, Hurst, who had by this time freed himself from his horse; but he, with that sort of passive bravery which is so characteristic of the English peasant, continued deliberately to unbuckle the girths of his saddle (about which, it appeared afterwards, all his stock was stowed away in various bags and contrivances), and made not the slightest effort to get out of musket-shot till he got the whole upon his back, after which he trudged away towards the hill, only injured by one ball which grazed his arm.

Losing no time by the way, Miss Walton soon rejoined the party of troopers at the knoll, and was giving them the order of Major Randal, when Barecolt himself came up at full speed, exclaiming,—

"Great news! great news! There is the Earl of Beverley with two hundred horse, ready to charge the Roundheads in the flank."

"We have Major Randal's orders to charge them in front," said the sergeant.

"Stay, stay!" cried Barecolt; "wait a minute, wait a minute! and then the man who does not kill his five of the enemy should never sit down with a gentleman to dinner again. Steady, my men, steady! look to your pistols; have ready your spurs. As soon as the earl has crossed the road I give the word."

"See, see!" cried Annie Walton; "they have got down into the meadow—they are fording the stream—see what a fire the enemy are keeping up upon them! Oh, charge, charge, for God's sake, and help them!"

"Madam, I always obey a lady," said Barecolt, with a low bow, at the same time raising the blade of his sword to his lips and kissing it. "She is the best commanding officer in the world. Now!—upon them! charge and at them!" and with these words he led his little troop forward with an air of gallantry and determination which went far to justify the gasconades in which he indulged.

The ford, though somewhat deep, was smooth and easy, but still it exposed the troop of Cavaliers to a terrible fire of musketry from the bridge; and Annie Walton, left alone with her women on the hill, saw with a sinking heart flash after flash run along the road, whilst the thick white smoke was wafted by the wind over her brother's party, rendering the figures indistinct, and concealing their movements in some degree from her eyes. A moment after, however, she saw two or three horsemen break out of the clouds and gallop on for several hundred yards into the meadows, then followed a greater number, and she could hear shouts and calls, in the midst of which she thought she distinguished her brother's voice; and then she saw the troopers halt and form again in line, while Barecolt, with his little party, bore steadily on at a quick pace somewhat to the right; and a much larger body of cavalry, which seemed to have taken a circuit from the village behind some hedgerows that skirted the edge of the plain, appeared advancing rapidly on the left of the musketeers, and occupying the whole space between the wood and the high road.

There was now a momentary pause, the firing ceased, the troop of Lord Walton and Major Randal remained still, the smoke cleared in some degree away, and Annie asked herself, "What next?"

The moment, however, that Barecolt came on a line with the rest, the shrill blast of a trumpet was heard from the two larger bodies of horse; all were again in movement; and, galloping forward towards the point occupied by the musketeers, the three parties of royalists charged headlong down upon them, while once more the bright flash of the firearms ran along the line of the road, and the cloud of smoke again rolled over the combatants.

It was no longer to be repulsed that the Cavaliers now charged. For full ten minutes the eyes of the watchers on the hill could perceive nothing but one struggling and confused

mass in the midst of the dim white cloud, with the frequent flashes of the guns, and every now and then a party of two or three becoming more apparent, and then plunging again into the midst of the *mêlée*. At the same time the frequent reports of the musketry and the long-continued blasts of the trumpet, mingled with shouts and cries, were borne by the wind to the ear, showing that the fight was continued with desperate determination on each side; and Annie Walton could restrain her anxiety no longer, but moved slowly forward towards the scene of combat.

Before she had advanced many yards, a horse without a rider rushed across the road and galloped over the meadows towards her—paused, turned round, and with elevated head and expanded nostrils gazed towards the place from which he came—then with a wild neigh broke away again, and rushed across the plain. In another instant three or four men on foot with muskets in their hands, were seen running at full speed, and Miss Walton checked her horse, fearing that they might come near her; but they made direct for one of the ditches we have mentioned, and, jumping in, seemed to couch down for concealment.

"They have won the day!" cried Annie Walton, and, turning to her women, who had followed somewhat slowly, she repeated, "The Cavaliers have won the day! God grant it may be without great loss!" and, at the thought of what might be her brother's fate in that fierce fight, her heart sank with that dread which we all feel when the veil which always hangs more or less over the future is brought nearer to our eyes, so as to render our contemplation even of the present dim and indistinct.

A larger party of foot, consisting of perhaps twenty or thirty men, was then seen hurrying along the road; but close upon them came a body of cavalry, and in a moment they were dispersed and flying over the plain. Almost at the same time the heavy mass of horse and infantry which had so long remained mingled together near the bridge seemed to explode like a shell, parties of foot and horsemen scattering here and there in every direction; and the terrible scene of a rout and pursuit now took place—the musketeers in general casting down their arms and flying, while the Cavaliers followed them here and there over the plain, and put them to the sword on the least show of resistance.

In the midst of all this disarray and confusion, a group of some twenty or thirty horsemen were seen gathered round a small flag upon the highest part of the road near the bridge; and after a brief pause, during which they remained perfectly still and motionless, the loud and peculiar trumpet-call—known in those days as the recall to the standard—came shrill but musical upon the air; and the next instant four or five horsemen separated themselves from the party, and rode up at an easy canter towards the wooded knoll.

Annie Walton gazed eagerly, and, recognising her brother's form after one moment of brief anxiety, rode on to meet him with her heart at ease. Lord Walton pushed forward his horse before the rest, and, wheeling it by her side, pressed her hand in his, murmuring, "My dearest Annie! my sweet sister! you have been sadly terrified, I fear, but yet you have shown yourself a soldier's child."

"Oh, Charles, Charles, you are wounded!" cried Annie, looking in his face, which was bleeding, and at a gory scarf which was round his left arm.

"Nothing, nothing!" replied her brother. "Men will have scratches when they fight with wild beasts, Annie; and these Roundheads have shown themselves as fierce and intractable as wolves or lions. They fought gallantly, however, it must be owned, and have made us pay dearly for our success."

"I fear so indeed, Charles," cried Miss Walton. "I am sure it must be so. But poor Arrah Neil—is she safe?"

"Oh yes, thank God!" replied Lord Walton. "I sent just now to the coach in which I had placed her, to make sure she was uninjured. I must not blame her rashness, my Annie, nor yours either, for it has been the means of saving us; but it was a terrible risk, my dear girl, and your escape is a miracle."

"And good Major Randal?" asked Annie, willing to change the subject.

"He is safe too," replied Lord Walton, "and without a scratch, though never man exposed himself more. But here comes another friend whom you will be glad to see, and to whom we owe all our success."

"Oh, Sir Francis Clare!" exclaimed Miss Walton, a glow of pleasure rising in her cheek; "I am most happy to see you."

"Nay, not Sir Francis Clare either," cried her brother, "but my oldest and truest friend, the Earl of Beverley."

"Nay," said Annie, with a smile, "it was not fair of you, my lord, to give me a false name the other day. I half intend to punish you by treating you as a stranger still. Had you told me it was Lord Beverley, I should not have said that I never heard my brother mention you, for I can assure you, in former days, his letters were full of no one else. However, there is my hand—I forgive you, trusting with all a woman's foolish confidence that you had some good reason for cheating me."

"I will never cheat you more, dear lady," replied Lord Beverley, taking her hand and raising it to his lips; "but in such times as these it is sometimes needful to seem not what we are, and these *noms-de-guerre*, when once assumed, should be kept up to every one. I had to ride near two hundred miles across a disturbed country, where the name of Francis Clare might pass unquestioned, when that of Beverley might have soon found me a lodging in the Tower. Walton said it was a rash act of mine to risk such an expedition at all; but I have

just heard from him that I am not the only rash person where there is a good cause and a great object to be gained."

"Nay, will you scold me too?" rejoined Miss Walton, laughing; "if so, I will hold no further conversation with you. Yet, my good lord, to say truth, I take less blame to myself for what I did than for not doing it at once. To see the poor girl, Arrah Neil, willing to risk her life to serve my brother shamed me, to think that she should encounter danger alone."

"But you might have sent one of the men, dear Annie," said Lord Walton; "it was a soldier's, not a lady's task to carry such intelligence."

"But they would not go," replied Annie Walton; and as they rode back towards the high road, she explained to her brother and his friend the circumstances under which she had acted.

For a minute or two the conversation was as gay and cheerful as a great success just obtained, a great deliverance just achieved, could render it. Lord Beverley explained to his fair companion that, having learned that morning, on entering the neighbouring village with a body of two hundred horse, which he had raised for the service of the king, that a regiment of parliamentary musketeers were lying concealed at the back of the wood, and supposing that their ambush was directed against himself, he had determined to remain in the place, and defend it, should need be, against them; but that when he found the passage of Lord Walton's troop was opposed, and his friend in danger, he had instantly called his men to the saddle, and advanced to support him. Lord Walton, too, related many of those actions which in such scenes of strife are always crowded into the space of a few minutes; and much praise did he bestow upon the gallant determination of Major Randal and his troop, and also upon the steadiness and courage displayed by his own tenantry and adherents. Captain Barecolt himself had his full share of commendation.

"I had thought," said Charles Walton, "from his ridiculous bravadoes during the last two days, that the man must be at least a coward, although Randal is not one to suffer such an animal near him; but it proved quite the contrary; for I saw his long body constantly in the thick of the *mêlée*, and his heavy sword cutting right and left at the steel caps of the musketeers, over the very muzzles of their guns."

As they approached nearer to the scene of conflict, however, the sights which Miss Walton witnessed—the dead, the dying, the wounded, the road stained with deep pools of blood, and the sounds that met her ear—the groan of anguish, the sad complaint, the cry for water and for help—blotted out all memory of their success; and with a shuddering frame and a sad heart she followed her brother to the spot where Major Randal was sitting by his cornet, on the parapet of the bridge, receiving accounts from the different troopers as they came in of the prisoners taken from the enemy, and the killed and wounded on their own part, while ever and anon a mounted trumpeter by his side blew a loud, long blast, to call the parties from the pursuit.

"Ah, Miss Walton!" cried the old officer, starting up and addressing her in his usual bluff tone; "I am glad to see you safe and well. I will never say that women are of no use any more; for, by my faith, you and that little girl got us out of a pretty predicament. I was blind enough or stupid enough, and so were all the rest, not to mark the little path, for we passed it in charging up to the bridge; but even if we had seen it, we should not have known that the stream was fordable below. However, get you into the carriage again, and shut your eyes or draw the curtains, for I see you look white and sickish, and these sights are not fit for women. The men will soon have pulled down that barricade, and then you can go on, while we get up the wounded and follow. We must do ten miles more to-night."

"I should prefer to ride," replied Miss Walton; "you had better put the wounded people in the carriages."

"True, true; well bethought," answered the old soldier. "You are a good girl after all."

Lord Walton smiled at this somewhat ambiguous compliment to his sister; but, as no time was to be lost, he left her under the care of Lord Beverley, and proceeded to give orders, and make those arrangements which the circumstances required. The barricade, which had been constructed hastily of felled trees, stone, and turf, was speedily removed, and the foremost of the carriages were being brought forward to receive some of the men severely wounded, who were lying about within the very narrow circle to which the strife had been confined, when Lord Walton's servant, Langan, rode up, exclaiming, "My lord! my lord! the prisoners have made their escape."

"What prisoners?" demanded Lord Walton, forgetting those he had brought from Bishop's Merton.

"Why, that Roundhead rascal and canting hypocrite, Dry of Longsoaken, with Thistleton and the rest."

"No," rejoined Roger Hartup, who was standing near, with a severe wound in his shoulder; "I shot Thistleton through the head after the first charge. He had picked up a sword, I don't know how, and got out of the carriage, and was just making a plunge at Jackson the forester when I blew his brains out with my pistol; you will find him lying behind the waggons. Of the rest I know nothing."

"They are all gone," answered Langan.

"And Arrah Neil?" exclaimed Lord Walton, advancing towards the carriages. But Arrah Neil was not there.

CHAPTER VIII.

INQUIRIES were made on every side, but in vain. No one had seen poor Arrah Neil since she had been placed in the coach by Lord Walton; and indeed, in the haste and confusion of the strife that had ensued after the troop had forded the river and attacked the enemy in front, no one had had an opportunity of witnessing what had taken place amongst the carriages, except two wounded men who had been left behind upon the road, one of whom had died before the struggle was over, while the other had crept for security under one of the waggons, which hid everything that was passing from his sight.

The agitation and alarm of Miss Walton and her brother seemed somewhat beyond measure in the eyes of good Major Randal, who was anxious to hasten forward with all speed. He waited somewhat impatiently while parties were sent over the plain, to seek for the poor girl who had disappeared; but at length he broke forth in a sharp tone, exclaiming, "We cannot remain here till night, my lord, waiting for this lost sheep; we have got all the wounded men into the coaches and on the waggons, and on my life we must be marching; we have prisoners enough to embarrass us sadly if we be attacked, and who can tell that we may not meet with another party of these worthies?"

"I think not," said the Earl of Beverley, who had shown a good deal of interest in the event which seemed to move his friend so much. "I have heard of no other Roundheads than these in this neighbourhood; but if you will march on, Walton, and take one half of my troop with you, I will remain behind with the rest, for they are fresher than your men, and we can overtake you after we have done all that is possible to discover this poor girl."

"No," answered Lord Walton, "I will not leave her behind, Francis, as long as there is a chance. You had better march on, major; I will stay with my own people, and follow you to Henley. Annie, you had better go on; your staying, dear sister, would but embarrass me. Lord Beverley will give you the advantage of his escort, and I will overtake you before night."

It was accordingly arranged as he proposed; and, to say the truth, Lord Beverley was by no means displeased with the task of protecting his friend's sister on the way. In the course of a quarter of an hour the whole troop was put in motion; and Annie Walton, though somewhat unwilling to leave her brother behind, followed on horseback, with the earl by her side, and some fourteen or fifteen horse bringing up the rear at a short distance behind. She had been rendered sad and desponding by all the events that had taken place; for the first joy of success and deliverance had by this time passed away, and the impression that remained was of that dark and gloomy character which her first entrance upon scenes of strife, bloodshed, and danger might naturally produce upon a gentle and kindly heart, however firm might be the mind, however strong the resolution.

Her companion well understood the feelings of a girl nurtured with tenderness and luxury, accustomed to deal only with the peaceful and the graceful things of life, when suddenly forced to witness and take part in the fierce and turbulent acts of civil war, to follow marching men, and be a spectator of battle and slaughter. He knew right well that no gay and lively subject would be pleasant to her ear at such a moment, though the soldier himself might cast off all memory of the strife the instant it was over, and give way to joy and triumph in the hour of success. The cavalier shaped his conversation accordingly, and, in a grave, though not sad tone, spoke of deeper and more solemn things than had formed the matter of their discourse when last they met. Nevertheless, seeking to win her from her gloom, there came from time to time, across the course of all he said, flashes of bright and brilliant eloquence, rich and imaginative illustrations, sparkling and almost gay allusions to other things and times and scenes, which, without producing the discord that anything like merriment would have occasioned to her ear, stole her thoughts away from gloomier subjects of contemplation, and, calling the blessed power of fancy to her aid, enabled her to bear up against the first weight of the dark present.

To Annie Walton there was an extraordinary charm in the conversation of the cavalier; it was like the current of a stream flowing on between deep and shady banks, profound, yet rapid and various, while ever and anon the sunshine breaks upon it through the trees, and lights it up for a space in all the sparkling lustre of the day. At first her replies were brief and few, but gradually she took a greater part in the discourse, answered at large, gave him her own thoughts in return for his, inquired as well as listened, and was often won to a smile. Thus they rode on for about two hours, the cavalier gaining more and more upon her, and, to speak the truth, the high qualities of her heart and mind winning from him as much admiration as her beauty and her grace commanded at the first sight.

Their progress, as before, was very slow, and once they had to pause for a quarter of an hour while the baggage of Lord Beverley's troop was brought forth from the village where he had left it, and added to that of the other party. At length, however, they came in sight of a small town, lying on the slope of a hill, with higher up towards the right a detached house and some tall trees about it, standing in the midst of a park or very large meadow, surrounded by ancient brick walls.

At this point of their march Major Randal rode back and spoke a few words to the earl, who replied, "Exactly as you like, major; I am under your command."

"Nay, my lord," replied the old officer, "I am under yours—you hold a higher commission."

"But with less experience, my good friend," answered the cavalier. "At all events, Major Randal, I will act by your advice: if you think we can reach Henley, well; if not, we will halt here."

"We might, if it were not for this lumbering baggage," answered the old soldier. "I cannot think what has made Lord Walton, who knows well what service is, cumber us with such stuff as this. A trooper should never have any baggage but his arms, a dozen crowns, and a clean shirt."

"You must not grumble, my good friend," replied the earl, dropping his voice. "If I understand Charles Walton rightly, there is that in those waggons which will be more serviceable to the king than all our broadswords."

"Ah, ah! I understand," said Major Randal. "If that be so, we must take care of it, otherwise I think I should be inclined to pitch the whole into the first river. Well, then, my lord, we will stop here, and, as that is your house, I believe, you may sleep in your own sheets for one night. We will quarter the men in the village, and I will send out to see that the road is clear for our march to-morrow."

"I shall expect you to supper, however, major," said the earl; "although I cannot tell whether there is any meat in the house, yet I know there is good old wine in the cellar, unless the Roundheads may have got into it since I was there."

"If they have, you will not find a bottle," replied Randal; "for, notwithstanding all their hypocrisy, they drink as deep as Cavaliers; the only difference is, that they cant where the others swagger. But as for your wine, my lord, you must drink it yourself for me. I am an old campaigner, and my saloon is the parlour of the ale-house; I am more at home there than amongst gilt chairs and sideboards of plate."

"Good faith! you will find little of those in my house," replied the earl; "so come if you will. But in the meantime I will guide this fair lady up, and take some of the men with me to guard the house; for there is but a young girl and an old butler of seventy, who recollects Queen Elizabeth, left to take care of it. All the rest of my people are in the saddle."

"That's where they should be, my lord," replied Randal. "I will make your cornet quarter the men, as the place is yours, and will see you before I sleep to plan our arrangements for to-morrow."

Thus saying, he rode on again; and the Earl of Beverley, after having given a few orders to his officers for the disposal of the force in the village, the guarding of the house, and the sending back of a small detachment to meet Lord Walton, rode up with his fair companion and her women by a narrow, wood-covered lane to the house upon the hill.

The building was not very large, being one of the old fortified houses which were common in England at that time, and many of which during the civil wars stood regular siege by the parliamentary forces. Strong towers and buttresses, heavy walls, narrow windows, and one or two irregular outworks, gave it a peculiar character, which is only to be met with now in some of the old mansions which have come down from those times to the present, falling rapidly into decay, and generally applied to viler uses. As was then customary, and as was the case at Bishop's Merton, a wide terrace spread before the house, upon which the earl and his companions drew in their horses; and, before she dismounted, Miss Walton turned to gaze over the view, while the cavalier sprang to the ground, and, casting his rein to one of the troopers who had followed him, approached to aid her.

"The prospect is not so wide as at Bishop's Merton, fair lady," said he; "but there is one object in it which will be as pleasant to your eye as any you could see at home. There comes your brother."

"I see a party of horse," said Annie Walton, "by the wood under the hill, but I cannot distinguish any of the figures."

"Oh, it is he, it is he!" cried her companion; "but I see no woman amongst them."

"Alas!" said Annie Walton; "what can have become of that poor girl?"

"It is strange indeed," said the cavalier; "but yet, Miss Walton, she may have been alarmed, and fled while the fight was going on. If any injury had happened to her, had she been wounded or killed by a chance shot, she must have been found by this time."

"Oh no; fear had nothing to do with it," replied Miss Walton; "she went through the midst of the fire to tell my brother of the path."

"Why, he said it was yourself," rejoined Lord Beverley.

"We both went," replied Annie Walton; "but she seemed to have no fear, and I confess my heart beat like a very coward's."

"It is indeed strange," said the earl; "but yet perhaps your brother may have tidings. Let me assist you to alight;" and, lifting her gently from the horse, he led her into the wide, ancient hall, at the door of which stood the old butler, his head shaking with age, but a glad look upon his countenance to see his lord once more returned.

From the hall, which felt chilly and damp, as if the door of the house had seldom been opened to the sunshine and free air, the earl conducted his companion up a flight of stone steps, and through some wide, unfurnished corridors, to a part of the house which presented a more cheerful and habitable appearance, giving a glance from time to time at the countenance of Miss Walton, as if to see what effect the desolate aspect of the place would

have upon her. Absorbed in other contemplations, however, she took no notice, and at length the cavalier called her attention to it himself, saying, with a faint and somewhat sad smile—

"You see, Miss Walton, what effect neglect can have. During my long absence from England everything has fallen into decay—more indeed in this house than in my dwelling in the north; but yet I reproach myself for having given way to the very mingled feelings that kept me from residing on my own land and amongst my own people. It is not indeed the ruin and desolation that falls upon one's property which a man ought to mind under such circumstances; but when a wealthy family dwell in the midst of their own tenantry, they build up a better mansion than any that is raised with hands, a nobler home than the lordly castle or the splendid palace—I mean that which is founded in the love and affection of friends and dependants, ornamented with kindly feelings and mutual benefits, obligations, gratitude, and esteem. And this is the house which falls into more horrible decay during a long absence than any of these things of brick or stone."

"I fear indeed it is so," said Miss Walton, walking on beside him into a large and handsome room, not only well furnished, but presenting some most beautiful pictures of the Italian school hanging upon the walls, while objects of *vertu* and instruments of music lay scattered over numerous tables, many of which were in themselves excessively costly.

"But it seems to me, my lord," she continued, "that in some respects your house and yourself are very much alike, though perhaps it is bold of me to say so; but now that I know whom you really are, I feel as much inclined to look upon you as an old friend as you did in regard to me when first we met."

"Thanks, thanks, sweet lady," answered the earl. "Oh, regard me ever so! But if you mean that in my house and in myself there are desolate and ruined corners, you are mistaken. I am not one of those who have either some real and deep grief overshadowing the heart for ever, or one of those who nourish a sentimental sorrow for nothing at all. There may be things in my own life that I regret; I may have lost dear friends and relations whom I mourn; but as the common course of events runs in this world, my life has been a very happy one, chequered indeed only by one terrible catastrophe, and by a great injury inflicted on my family by the king whom now I serve, which made me resolve, like a foolish boy as I then was, never to set foot in my native land while he remained in power. When I found that he was fallen, dispossessed, and in need, I came back in haste to serve him, with that loyalty which I trust will long be the distinction of a British gentleman."

"I did not exactly mean what you think," replied Miss Walton; "I merely wished to remark that you seem sometimes as gay and cheerful as this room in which we now are, sometimes as sad and gloomy as the hall through which we lately passed." She coloured a little as she spoke, from an indefinite consciousness that the woman who remarks so closely the demeanour of a young and handsome man may well be suspected of taking a deeper interest in him than she wished to believe she did in her companion.

The cavalier replied at once, however, without remarking the blush, "It must ever be so, Miss Walton, with those who feel and think. Is it not so with yourself? The spirit that God gives us is made for happiness, full of high aspirations and bright capabilities of enjoyment; but it is placed in a world of trial and of difficulty, prisoned in a corporeal frame that checks and limits its exertions, chained down by cares and circumstances that burden its free energies. Whenever the load is not felt, whenever the walls of the dungeon are not seen, the captive gladly casts off the remembrance that such things exist, and rejoices in their absence. But ever and anon they present themselves to his eyes, or press upon his limbs, and he mourns under the weight that he cannot wholly cast off. But here comes your brother; and I will only add, that you shall see me sad no more, if you will bargain with me that you will be cheerful."

In a few minutes Lord Walton himself entered the room; but his countenance bespoke no good tidings of her he had been in search of. He had been unable to gain any information whatever, though he left no effort unmade; and he was evidently deeply mortified and grieved, so that the next two hours passed in sadness upon all parties.

While the necessary arrangements were made for lodging the party in the house for the night, some occupation of a less sad character than the loss of poor Arrah Neil was given to the thoughts of Miss Walton by all the little inconveniences and difficulties attendant upon the sudden arrival of a large party in a mansion unprepared for their reception. Though accustomed through life to every sort of comfort, Annie Walton was not one to make much of trifles; and she was amused rather than otherwise at all the small annoyances, and at the dismay and embarrassment of her maids. When she returned from the rooms which had been assigned to her and her female companions to that which was called in the house the picture-room, she found her brother conversing in the window with his friend, with a bright and cheerful countenance, which surprised her. The change was explained in a moment, however, by Charles Walton holding out a dirty strip of paper to her, and saying, "Here is news of our poor Arrah, Annie. She is safe, although I cannot tell where."

Annie took the scrap of paper, and read, merely observing as she did so, "This is not Arrah's hand; she writes beautifully.

The note ran as follows :—

MY LORDE.—This is to tell you, as I heer that you have been a-running after pretty Arrah Neil all the evening, that she is saif in this place, and as well as may be. I can't come just at present, for reasons ; but I will be over with you by cock-crow to-morrow morning, and either bring her, if I can, or take you to her.—I subscribe myself, my lorde, your obedient servant to command,

JOHN HURST.

"Francis here," said Lord Walton, when his sister had done reading, "has been laughing at me for the reputation which I have acquired of running after *pretty* Arrah Neil during the whole evening ; but I think I may set laughs at defiance regarding her, Annie."

"I think so too," answered Miss Walton, with a smile ; "but I wish we knew where she is."

As often happens, however, when, in the midst of many cares and anxieties, one subject of alarm and grief is removed, all the rest are forgotten for the time, the news of poor Arrah's safety restored the cheerfulness of all the party. We draw an augury of future happiness from each blessing that befalls us, from each relief that is afforded ; and it is not till new difficulties press upon us that apprehension resumes its sway.

Cheerfulness then returned to the party assembled in Lord Beverley's house ; they sat down to the pleasant evening meal, which closed a day of strife and danger, with hearts lightened and expectations raised ; the merry voices of the troopers who were supping in the hall below gave them warning how best to treat the cares of the time ; and if an anxiety or thought of the future did break in for a moment upon them, it was but to teach them to enjoy the present hour, inasmuch as no forethought or grave contemplation could affect the coming events. Lord Beverley exerted himself, without any apparent effort, to keep the conversation in its cheerful tone ; and when Miss Walton made some inquiries as to any danger or difficulty which might lie upon the march of the following day, he exclaimed gaily, "Away with such thoughts, fair lady ! we have taken every precaution ; we have done all that we can to guard against evil ; we have true hearts and a good cause ; and in trust of God's protection let us enjoy these hours of tranquillity. They are treasures, believe me, that are not often met with ; let us gather them whilst we can. The best of husbandry, depend upon it, is to sift the corn from the chaff, to separate the gold from the dross, in the portion of time that is allotted to us, and not to mingle the sorrow of to-morrow with the enjoyment of to-day. Come, Miss Walton," he added, "you must add to our present happiness by letting us hear once more that sweet voice in song, such as delighted me at Bishop's Merton."

"Nay, not to-night," said Annie Walton. "It is your turn now, my lord. By all these instruments of music, I am sure you sing yourself. Is it not so, Charles ?"

"Beautifully !" replied Lord Walton ; "and what is better than all, Annie, he requires no pressing."

"I will, with all my heart," replied the cavalier, "but upon one condition—that I am called no more 'my lord.' Charles Walton and Francis Beverley have been too long brothers for the sister of either to use so cold a term. What shall I sing ? It must be of love in a lady's presence, otherwise were I no true knight ;" and, taking a large Venetian mandolin from the table behind him, he put it in tune, and sang,—

Light of my heart ! my heart's intense desire !
Soul of my soul ! thou blossom and thou beam !
Thou kindlest day with more than summer's fire,
Thou bright'nest night like some celestial dream.

The sight of thee gives sunshine to my way,
Thy music breath brings rapture to my ear ;
My thoughts thy thoughts, like willing slaves, obey,
Oh thou most beautiful ! oh thou most dear !

One look of thine is worth a monarch's throne,
One smile from thee would raise the dying head ;
One tear of thine would melt the heart of stone ;
One kiss, one kiss, would vivify the dead.

Near thee the hours like moments fleet away ;
Absent, they linger heavy on the view :
In life, in death, oh, let me with thee stay !
Oh thou most beautiful, most good, most true !"

The voice was rich and mellow, with all the cultivation which the art of Italy could at that time bestow. There was no effort, there was nothing forced ; every note seemed as much a part of the expression of the thought as the words in which it was clothed. But there was a fire, a warmth, an enthusiasm in the singer, which gave full depth and power to the whole. It was impossible to see him and to hear him without forgetting that he was singing a song composed probably long before, and without believing that he was giving voice, in the only way his feelings would permit, to the sensations of the moment.

Annie Walton knew not why, but her heart beat quickly as she sat and listened ; the long black eyelashes of her beautiful eyes remained sunk towards the ground, and her fair cheek became pale as marble. She would fain have looked up when the song was done—she would fain have thanked the cavalier, and expressed her admiration of his music, but she could do neither, and remained perfectly silent, while her brother remarked the emotion which she felt, and turned his eyes with a smile from her countenance to that of her friend.

But the earl, too, had fallen into thought, and with his hand leaning upon the mandolin, which he had suffered to drop by his knee till it reached the floor, seemed gazing upon the frets, as if the straight lines of ivory contained some matter of serious contemplation. Miss Walton coloured as she marked the silence, and looking suddenly up said one or two commonplace words, which at once betrayed an effort. They served, however to renew the conversation again.

Another and another song succeeded, and, after about an hour spent in this manner, the party separated and retired to rest, while Annie

Walton asked herself, with an agitated breast, "What is the meaning of this?" The sensations were new to her, and for more than an hour they banished sleep from her pillow.

CHAPTER IX.

We must now change the scene, and, without much consideration of the "pathos and bathos delightful to see," must remove the reader from the higher and more refined society of Lord Walton, his sister, and the Earl of Beverley, to the small sanded parlour of the little alehouse in the village. We must also advance in point of time for about three hours, and put the hour-hand of the clock midway between the figures one and two, while the minute-hand is quietly passing over the six. All was still in the place; the soldiery were taking their brief repose, except a sentinel who walked up and down, pistol in hand, at each entrance of the village; and the villagers themselves, having recovered from the excitement caused by the arrival of the party and the drinking and merriment which followed it, had taken possession of such beds as the troopers left them, and were enjoying the sweet but hard-earned slumber of daily labour.

Two living creatures occupied the parlour of the alehouse: a large tabby cat, which—as if afraid that the mice upon which she waged such interminable and strategic war might take advantage of her own slumbers to surprise her—had mounted upon a three-legged stool, and was enjoying her dreams in peace, curled up in a comfortable ball; and Captain Barecolt, who, seated in a wooden arm-chair, with his long leg-bones, still in their immemorial boots, stretched upon another, kept watch, if such it could be called, with a large jug of ale beside him, from which he took every now and then deep draughts, for the purpose, as he mentally declared, of "keeping himself awake."

The effect was not exactly such as he expected, for from time to time he fell into a doze, from which a sort of drowsy consciousness of the proximity of the ale roused him up every quarter of an hour to make a new application to the tankard. At length, feeling that these naps were becoming longer, he drew his legs off the chair, muttering,—

"This won't do! I shall have that dried herring Randal upon me; I must take a pipe and smoke it out."

And thereupon he moved hither and thither in the parlour, looking for the implements necessary in the operation to which he was about to apply himself. These were speedily found, and a few whiffs soon enveloped him in a cloud as thick as that in which Homer's Jove was accustomed to enshrine himself on solemn occasions; and in the midst of this the worthy captain continued ruminating upon the mighty deeds he had done and was to do.

He thought over the past, and congratulated himself upon his vast renown; for Captain Barecolt was one of those happy men who have a facility of believing their own fictions. He was convinced that, if he could but count them up, he had performed more feats of valour and slaughtered more bloody enemies than Amadis de Gaul, Launcelot of the Lake, the Admiral de Coligni, or the Duke of Alva. It was true he thought such events soon passed from the minds of great men, being common occurrences with them, so that he could not remember one half of what he had done, which he only regretted for the sake of society; but he was quite sure that whenever opportunities served he should be found superior to any of the great captains of the age, and that merit and time must lead him to the highest distinction. This led him on to futurity, and he made up his mind that the first thing he would do should be to save the king's life when attacked on every side by fifteen or sixteen horsemen. For this, of course, he would be knighted on the spot, and receive the command of a regiment of horse, with which he proposed to march at once to London, depose the lord mayor, and, proceeding to the Parliament House, dissolve the Parliament, seize the Speaker and twelve of the principal members, and hang Sir Harry Vane. This, he thought, would be work enough for one day; but the next morning he would march out with all the Cavaliers he could collect, defeat the Earl of Essex on one side, rout Waller on the other, and then, with his prisoners, proceed to head-quarters, where, of course, he would be appointed general-in-chief, and in that capacity would bring the king to London.

What he would do next was a matter of serious consideration, for, the war being at an end, Othello's occupation was gone; and as, during all this time he had made sundry applications to his friend the tankard, his imagination was becoming somewhat heavy on the wing, so that, in a minute or two after he fell sound asleep, while the pipe dropped unnoticed from his hand, and fractured its collar-bone upon the floor.

He had scarcely been asleep ten minutes when the door of the room slowly opened, and a round head covered with short curls was thrust in, with part of a burly pair of shoulders. The door was then pushed partly open, and in walked a stout man in a good brown coat, who, advancing quietly to the side of Captain Deciduous Barecolt, laid his hand upon his arm. Now, what Captain Barecolt was dreaming of at that moment it is impossible for the author of these pages to tell; but his vision would appear to have been pugnacious, for the instant the intruder's grasp touched his left arm he started up, and, stretching out his right hand to a pistol which lay between the tankard and himself on the table, snatched it up, levelled it at the head of his visitor, and pulled the trigger.

Luckily for the brains, such as they were, of poor John Hurst (for he was the person who

had entered), in the last unsteady potations of the bellicose captain a few drops of ale had been spilt upon the pan of the deadly weapon; and, though the flint struck fire, no flash succeeded, much to the astonishment of Barecolt and the relief of his companion.

"D——n the man!" cried Hurst, reeling back in terror; "what art thou about? Dost thou go to shoot a man without asking, 'with your leave, or by your leave'?"

"Never wake a sleeping tiger!" exclaimed Barecolt, with a graceful wave of his hand. "You may think yourself profoundly lucky, master yeoman, that you have got as much brains left in that round box of yours as will serve to till your farm, for this hand never yet missed anything within shot of a pistol or reach of a sword. I remember very well once, in the island of Sardinia, a Corsican thought fit to compare his nose to mine, upon which I told him that the first time we met I would leave him no nose to boast of. He, being a wise man, kept ever after out of reach of my hands; but one day, when he thought himself in security upon a high bank, he called out to me, 'Ha, ha, capitaine! I have got my nose still!' upon which, drawing out my pistol, I aimed at his face, and, though the distance was full a hundred yards, with the first shot I cut off his proboscis at the root, so that it dropped down upon the road, and I picked it up and put it in my pocket."

"It must have been somewhat thin in the stalk," said Hurst; "no good stout English nose, I warrant you. But come, captain, you must take me up to my lord. The sentry passed me on to you, and I want help directly, for there is a nest of Roundheads not five miles from here, who have got that poor little girl in their hands, and are brewing mischief against us to-morrow. Half a dozen men may take them to-night, but we may have hard work of it if we wait till daylight."

Captain Barecolt paused and meditated; a glorious opportunity of buying distinction cheaply seemed now before him, and the only difficulty was how to keep it all in his own hands.

"I cannot disturb the commander," he said in a solemn tone, after a few minutes' consideration; "that's quite impossible, my friend. Faith, if you want help, you must be content with mine and half a dozen soldiers of my troop. I am a poor creature, it is true," he continued, in a tone of affected modesty, "and not able to do so much service as some men. I never killed above seventeen enemies in a day; and the best thing I have to boast of is having blown up a fort containing three hundred men with my own unassisted hand. However, what poor aid I can give you may command. We will take six picked men with us, if that be enough; you and I will make eight; and if there be not more than a hundred and fifty of the enemy, I think we could manage."

"A hundred and fifty!" cried Hurst. "Why, there are but seven, and one of them is not a fighting man."

"Who may they be?" asked Barecolt in a solemn tone. "If there be but seven we shall have no need of any men; I will go alone. Who may they be?"

"Why, there's that Captain Batten, whom my lord took away prisoner, I hear," replied Hurst; "then there's a Dr. Bastwick, a Parliamentary committee man; then there's old Dry of Longsoaken, who dragged away the girl while you were all fighting at the bridge; the other four are, I hear, common councilmen of Coventry, though they are all decked out in buff and bandolier, as if they were fire-eating soldiers just come from the wars. They were laying a plan before they went to bed for bringing troops from Coventry round about my lord and his men, while two regiments of Essex's, that are marching into the north, were to have warning, and cut off the retreat."

"Ha, ha, ha!" cried Captain Barecolt; "we will cut off theirs. Have you got a horse, master yeoman? I think yours was killed in the field."

"Ay, that it was," answered Hurst, "to my loss and sorrow; as good a beast as ever was crossed, and cost me twenty pound."

"We will mount you, we will mount you," said the captain; "there are a dozen and more good horses which forgot their riders yesterday, and left them lying by the bridge. We may as well have half-a-dozen men with us, however, just to tie the prisoners, for that is not work for gentlemen; so you sit down and take a glass of ale, and I will get all things ready."

In the course of about a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes, Captain Barecolt had called to his aid eight men of the troop whom he could most depend upon; and after having brought down Major Randal's cornet to take his post during his absence, and mounted good John Hurst on the horse of a trooper who had been killed the day before, he led the way out of the little town, and, guided by the yeoman across the country, advanced slowly towards another village situated in the plain, about five or six miles from that in which they had taken up their quarters. The country was open, without woods or hedges, but the night was profoundly dark, and the wind sighing in long gusts over the open fields. Nothing was to be seen except the glimmer of a piece of water here and there, till they approached the village to which their steps were bent, when one or two lights became visible amongst the houses, as if, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, all the inhabitants had not yet retired to rest. One of these lights, too, as if proceeding from a lantern, appeared moving about in the gardens; and Captain Barecolt, turning to Hurst, asked him in a low voice,—

"What is the meaning of those lights?"

"I don't know," answered the yeoman. "It was all dark when I crept away."

"We shall soon see," rejoined Barecolt. "You are sure there are no troops in the place?"

"There were none when I left it," replied

Hurst; but, almost as he spoke, a loud voice exclaimed,—

"Stand! Who goes there?"

"A friend," answered Barecolt.

"Stand, and give the word!" repeated the voice, and at the same moment a small red spot of fire, as if produced by a man blowing a match, appeared immediately before them; and Barecolt, spurring on his horse, found himself in the presence of a matchlock-man, at whose head he aimed a cut with his heavy sword, which rang sharply upon a steel cap, and brought the man upon his knee.

He fired his piece, however, but he missed his mark, and threw down the gun, while Barecolt, catching him by the shoulder, put his sword to his throat, exclaiming,—

"Yield, or you are a dead man!"

The sentinel had no hesitation on the subject, having already received a sharp wound on the head, which left him little inclination to court more.

"Now tell me who is in the village," exclaimed Barecolt; "and see that you tell truth, for your life depends upon it."

"Three companies of Colonel Harris's regiment," answered the soldier, "and a troop of Lord Essex's own horse."

"The number?" demanded Barecolt.

"Four hundred foot and a hundred troopers," replied the man; and, having a little recovered from his first apprehension, he demanded, "Who may you be?"

"My name is Johnson," answered Barecolt readily, "first captain of Sir Nicholas Jarvis's regiment of horse, marching up to join the Earl of Beverley and Lord Walton at Hendon, near Coventry. We thought they were quartered in this village: whereabout do they lie?"

"Oh no," answered the man; "they are five miles to the east, we hear, and we were to attack them on the march to-morrow."

"Are you telling me the truth?" said Barecolt in a stern tone; "but I will make sure of that, for I will take you with me to Sir Nicholas Jarvis, and if we find you have cheated us as to where they lie, you shall be shot to-morrow at daybreak. Tie his hands, some of you— Hark! there is a drum! There, curse him, let him go; we have no time to spare; I must get back to Sir Nicholas, and let him know we are on the wrong road."

Thus saying, he turned his horse and rode away, followed by the rest of his party; while the tramp of men coming down fast from the village was heard behind them.

The reader need not be told that Captain Barecolt never had the slightest intention of carrying off the wounded sentinel with him; for, having filled him with false intelligence regarding the march of his imaginary regiment, he was very glad to leave him behind to communicate it to his fellows in the place. In the meanwhile, he himself gave orders for putting the horses into a quick trot, and returning with all speed to the village, where, without communicating any tidings he had gained to any one, he left his men, and hurried up with Hurst to the mansion on the hill.

The earl and Lord Walton were immediately called up, and Barecolt, being admitted to their presence, made his statement. We are by no means so rash as to assert that the account he gave was altogether true; for Captain Deciduous Barecolt, much more skilful than the writer of this tale, never lost sight of his hero, and his hero was always himself; but, at all events, the intelligence he brought of the enemy was accurate enough, and the stratagem he had used to deceive the foe was also told correctly, and received great commendation. He was sent down immediately, however, to call Major Randal to the council, and in the meantime the two young noblemen eagerly questioned Hurst as to what he had seen and heard amongst the adverse party.

The good yeoman's tale was told briefly and simply, and showed the following facts:—After his horse had been killed, he had carried off his saddle and the other worldly goods which he possessed; and finding that, without being of any service to his party, he was in imminent danger of losing his own life from the stray shots that were flying about in different directions, he made the best of his way to the back of the little mound we have mentioned, and thence peeped out to see the progress of the fight. Perceiving at one time, as he imagined, the small force of Royalists wavering in their attack upon the musketeers, he judged it expedient, lest his friends should be defeated, to put a greater distance between himself and the enemy; and taking all the articles that were most valuable to him out of the saddle, he left it behind him, and hurried on for about a mile farther, where he took up his position in a ditch. While thus ensconced, he saw the well-known form of Mr. Dry of Longsoaken, together with that of another gentleman, whom he afterwards found to be Captain Batten. Between these two appeared poor Arrah Neil, of whose arm Dry retained a firm grasp, while he held a pistol in his right hand, under the authority of which he seemed to be hurrying her on unresistingly.

In about a quarter of an hour more some fugitive musketeers ran by as fast as they could go, and shortly after several of Major Randal's troopers appeared in pursuit; but, as Hurst was unacquainted with the soldiers, he prudently resolved to lie concealed where he was till some of his lord's followers should come up, which he calculated would be shortly the case, fearing he might be taken for one of the enemy, or, at all events, that he might be plundered by a friend —an operation as common in those days as in the present, though then it was done with pistol and broadsword, and now, in general, with pen and ink.

Towards the end of the day some of Lord Walton's men did appear, and spoke a word to him in passing, from which he gathered that they were searching for Arrah Neil; but, with the usual acuteness of persons sent upon a search,

they rode on without waiting for any information he could give. Having marked the road which Dry and his companions had taken, Hurst then determined to follow them, and made his way to the village, in which they halted for the night. His plan had proved successful, he said; he had found the two Parliamentary committee men, together with Mr. Dry of Longsoaken, lodged in a house in the village, and, boldly seeking out Dry, he gave him to understand that he had been taken by Lord Walton to join the king against his will, and was now making the best of his way home. He affected some fear of being overtaken; and, in order to reassure him, Dry and Bastwick communicated to him the intelligence they received in the course of the evening from the men of Coventry, in regard to the movement of Parliamentary forces. This took place some hours subsequently, however, to the despatch of his note to Lord Walton, and he could not make his escape from the village, in order to carry more accurate tidings to his young landlord, till Dry and the rest had retired to bed.

As soon as Major Randal arrived, a hasty consultation was held, to ascertain the course of proceedings which it would be expedient to follow. It was determined, notwithstanding great reluctance on the part of Lord Walton, to leave poor Arrah Neil in the hands of Mr. Dry of Longsoaken, that the march should be immediately commenced; and orders were given to that effect, which at once produced all the bustle and confusion of hasty departure. Miss Walton was called up, and, dressing herself hastily, was soon placed upon horseback once more, for it was determined to leave the carriages behind; and in about an hour the two noblemen and their followers, with Major Randal's troop, were marching on in the grey of the dawn, directing their steps towards Coventry. A small guard was left over the prisoners, with orders to remain behind about an hour, and then to leave them and follow with all speed, in order that the departure of the troops might be accomplished as secretly as possible. No trumpet was sounded; and if it had been possible to carry out King Lear's plan, and shoe a troop of horse with felt, it would have been upon the present occasion.

Though that could not be accomplished, all their proceedings were conducted with as much silence as possible; and Miss Walton, riding between her brother and the Earl of Beverley, had plenty of time for thought. The sky had changed from grey to purple and gold; the expanse of the heavens had lost its glorious hues, as the sun rose up above the horizon; and the morning of a somewhat dull and heavy day had fully dawned ere any one spoke, except, indeed, when the few short words of command and direction were necessary. The countenance of Lord Walton was grave, and even sad; and his sister, who watched it with some anxiety, at length inquired,—

"Do you anticipate any great danger, Charles? You look very gloomy."

"Oh no, dearest Annie," he answered; "I think we are so far before our enemies that we shall without doubt be able to join the king before they are aware of our departure. But I cannot think of being obliged to leave that poor girl in the hands of that old hypocrite Dry, without feeling very sad. If he treat her ill, woe be to him should he and I ever meet again! but I trust he will be afraid to endanger his sanctified reputation. That is my only hope."

The earl now joined in, with that tone of calm cheerfulness which is the most persuasive of hope; and, with the peculiar charms of his conversation, and the continued and brilliant variety which it displayed, led the thoughts of his companions to happier themes, and almost made them believe that brighter days were before them. Since the preceding night his manner had much changed towards Miss Walton; there was a tenderness in it, a tone which can only be called the tone of love; and though both were more silent than they previously had been, yet each, in that silence, was thinking of the other, and it is very dangerous so to do, unless we are disposed to yield to feelings which in the end may master us altogether. Coquetry may talk, may carry on uninterrupted observation and reply; indifference may pursue the calm and easy current of conversation; and avowed and satisfied love may hold unbroken communion upon all the many subjects of thought and imagination; but in its early day true passion is fitful in its eloquence, full of silence and interruptions, for it is full of thought; and the voice of feeling is often the strongest when the lips are motionless and the tongue is mute.

But we will dwell no more upon such matters, for we have action before us instead of thought, deeds rather than sensations. After a march of about four hours, and a short pause for refreshment, the advanced party of the troop was seen to halt upon a small eminence, while one of the troopers rode back at full speed, bringing the intelligence that they descried a considerable body of men draw up at a short distance from Coventry.

"Are we so near?" said Miss Walton.

"Within three miles," replied the earl. "That is the spire of St. Michael's Church rising over the slope. You will see the city as soon as we pass the rise. Think you these are the king's troops, Major Randal?"

"Ay, such troops as they are," answered the old officer; "we must have more and better before we do much service."

"It will be as well to despatch some one to see," said Lord Walton. "I will send two of my servants, major. Here, Langan and Hartup, ride on with all speed, and bring me back news of the people who are before Coventry. I cannot divine why the king should halt before the gates."

"There may be rogues within," said Major Randal. And so it proved; for, on their arrival at the top of the slope, where Coventry, with its wide walls and beautiful spires, rose fair before them, they saw a fire of musketry opened from

the city upon a small party of royalist troops which approached too near the gates.

Marching rapidly on, as soon as it was ascertained that the force they saw was that of Charles himself, they soon reached the monarch's army, if so it could be called, and Annie Walton found herself in the midst of a new and animated scene.

The king's face expressed much grief and vexation, as, sitting upon a powerful horse, he consulted with some of his principal officers as to what was to be done on the rebellious refusal of Coventry to give him admission. But when he turned to receive the little reinforcement which now joined him, his countenance assumed a glad and cheerful look; and as Lord Walton, dismounting, approached his stirrup, he held out his hand to him graciously, saying,—

"Those are kind friends and loyal subjects indeed, my lord, who rally round their sovereign when more favoured men forsake him. Your own presence, my good sir, is the best answer you could give to my letters. We must retreat, I fear, however, from before these inhospitable walls; for we have no cannon to blow open their gates, and, even if I had, I could wish to spare my subjects."

"Ah, sire!" said Major Randal, who had also advanced to the king's side, "when subjects draw the sword against their king, both parties should throw away the scabbard, for it is the blade must decide all."

"Too rough, and yet too true," said his majesty; and after a few more words addressed to Lord Beverley and Miss Walton, the king turned his horse and rode off with his attendants towards Stonely, leaving the small force by which he was accompanied to follow.

CHAPTER X.

THREE or four days had elapsed, and the party in whose fate we have interested ourselves had reached the town of Nottingham in safety; but gloom and despondency hung over the court of the king, over the small force at his command, and over the whole city. Proclamation had been made for all loyal subjects to join the monarch in Nottingham; and it had been announced on that day, the 25th of August 1642, that Charles would set up his royal standard against his rebellious Parliament. Few persons, however, joined him; not a single regiment of foot had been raised; the body of horse which he had led to Coventry had been little increased since he had retreated from that city; the artillery and ammunition from York had not yet arrived; and sadness was upon every brow and apprehension in every heart.

The evening was dark and gloomy, the wind rising in sharp and howling gusts; large drops of rain were borne upon the blast, and everything promised a night of tempest, when the king, accompanied by all the noblemen and gentlemen who had joined him, set out on horseback for the hill on which stands the old castle of Nottingham, with the knight-marshal before him bearing the royal standard, and a small body of the train-bands accompanying it as a guard. On reaching the spot destined for the ceremony, the standard-pole was fixed with great difficulty, amidst the roll of the drum and the loud blasts of the trumpet. But neither the war-stirring sound of the drum nor the inspiring voice of the trumpet could cheer the hearts of those around, or give them confidence even in the success of a good cause; and, with the same sadness with which they had gone thither, the royal party returned from the castle hill just as the evening was growing grey with night.

Some four or five hours after, Lord Walton, who had participated fully in the gloomy feelings which pervaded the whole court, rose from the supper-table at which he had been seated with his sister, the Earl of Beverley, and one or two friends who had joined them in Nottingham; and said,—

"My head aches, dearest Annie; I will walk up to the castle hill and take a look at the standard. The air will do me good."

"I will go with you, Charles," said Miss Walton, rising. "I will not keep you a minute."

"Nay, not in such a night as this, Annie," answered her brother. "Do you not hear how the wind blows, as if it would force in those rattling casements?"

"Oh, I mind not the wind," replied Annie Walton. "You shall lend me your arm, Charles; it will always be strong enough to steady your sister's steps."

"God grant it, dear one!" replied Lord Walton. "Well, come! I do wish to talk with you, Annie, upon many things;" and in a few minutes they were in the streets of Nottingham.

The wind was even more violent than they had expected; but the tall houses of the good old town, though exposed by its position to the blasts, gave them some shelter; and as they walked along, Lord Walton, after a few minutes' silence, put his right hand upon his sister's, which grasped his arm, and said, "I wish to speak to you of the future, dear one. Danger and strife are before me. It is impossible for you to follow the movements of an army, and therefore I wish, before I march hence, to take you to the house of our good old cousin, Lady Margaret Langley, where you may rest in safety."

"I will go, Charles, if you wish it," replied Miss Walton; "but it must be only upon the condition that no restraint be put upon my movements, and that whenever there is a pause in the war, I may be allowed to follow and be near you."

"Of course, dear sister," replied her brother; "I don't pretend to restrain you in anything,

Annie. You are old enough, and wise enough, and good enough, to decide entirely upon your own actions. You must keep several of the servants with you to guard you and protect you wherever you go. You must also have a sufficient sum to put you above any circumstances of difficulty, whatever you may think fit to do."

"Oh, I have the jewels, you know, Charles!" said Miss Walton; "and more money of my own with me than will be needful."

"Well, we will see to that hereafter," said Lord Walton; "but there is another subject on which I would speak to you. No one can tell what may be the chance of war. I may go safely through the whole of this sad strife, and see the end of it. I may fall the first shot that is fired. But if I do, Annie, you will need some strong arm and powerful mind to protect and support you. In that case, I would leave you as a legacy, as a trust, as a charge, to the best friend I have on earth—the oldest, the dearest. Francis Beverley loves you, Annie."

"Hush! oh, hush, Charles!" cried Miss Walton, and he felt her hand tremble upon his arm.

"Nay, sweet sister!" continued her brother; "I asked you for no confessions. Your tale is told already, dear girl. All I ask is, will you, when I am gone, without reserve or woman's vain reluctance, trust in him, rely in him, as you do on me?"

His sister was silent for a moment, and he repeated,—

"Will you, Annie, forget all coyness, all unkind and ungenerous diffidence, and, recollecting he has been a brother to your brother, confide in him as such?"

Annie Walton paused again for a single instant, and then, with her face bent down, though no one could see her glowing cheek in the darkness, she murmured, "I will."

Lord Walton pressed her hand in his, and then in silence led the way up to the hill.

It was with difficulty that they ascended, so fierce were the gusts of wind; but the very violence of the blast scattered from time to time the drifting clouds, and the moon occasionally looked forth and cast a wavering light upon their path. Not a soul, however, did they meet in their way; all was still and silent but the howling of the tempest, till at length, when they reached the top, the voice of a sentinel exclaimed as usual, "Stand! Who goes there?"

"A friend," replied Lord Walton; and before the man could demand it he gave the word for the night, saying, "The crown."

"Pass!" replied the sentinel; and he walked on with his sister clinging to his arm.

The moon shone out again; and Miss Walton and her brother both gazed forward towards the spot where the standard had stood. They could not see it; and, hurrying on their steps, they found four or five of the train-band standing round the place. The standard itself was lying flat upon the ground.

In answer to Lord Walton's questions, the men informed him that the wind had blown it down, and that they found it was impossible to raise it again; and, turning sadly away, the young nobleman murmured in a low voice to his sister, "God send this be not an omen of our royal master's fate!"

CHAPTER XI.

In a small tavern at Nottingham was a large but low-roofed room, with the heavy beams, blackened by smoke, almost touching the heads of some of the taller guests; in which, on the night after that of which we have just spoken, were assembled as many persons as it could well contain; and a strange scene of confusion it presented. Hats and feathers, swords and daggers, pipes and glasses, bottles and plates, big men and little, men of war and men of peace; an atmosphere composed of smoke, of the fumes of wine, the smell of strong waters and of beer, and the odour of several large pieces of roast meat, together with sounds of innumerable kinds, oaths, cries for the tapster and the boy, loud laughter, low murmurs, the hoarse accusation, the fierce rejoinder, the sustained discussion, the prosy tale, and the dull snore, as well as the half-drunken song, had all their place in the apartment, which might well have been supposed the taproom of the tower of Babel. The house was, in short, a place of resort for the lower order of Cavaliers, and the hour that at which the greater part, having supped, were betaking themselves to their drink with the laudable determination, then but too common, of leaving themselves as little wit as possible till the next morning.

"*Basta, basta!* It sufficeth!" cried a tall man with a peculiarly constructed nose. "I would find the good youth if he were in a hundred Hulls. What's Hull to me? or I to Hull? as the poet says. I know, if I can bring the girl back out of his clutches, where a hundred crowns are to be got. We have open hands amongst us; but mark me, master, if you are deceiving me, I will cut your ears off."

The man whom he addressed was a small, sharp-eyed man, reddish in the hair and pale about the gills; but he answered stoutly, "That's what you dare not, Master Barecolt."

"Dare not!" cried Barecolt, seizing a knife that lay upon the table and starting up with an ominous look,—"dare not! What is it that I dare not? Now, look you, repeat that word again, and you shall go forth from this room with no more ears than a grinder's cur. Dare not! thou small chandler, I could break you across my knee like a piece of rotten wood."

There was some truth in what he said, and the small man felt the force of that truth, so that he thought it expedient to lower his tone.

"I meant I would take the law of you if you did," he said; "so no more of cutting off ears,

Master Barecolt, for we have sharp justices in Nottingham. But what I said is very true. I know old Dry very well; have known him, indeed, these twelve years. When first he used to come to Hull to buy goods of the Hamburghers, I had a shop there, where he used to stop and take a glass of cinnamon now and then. But he has grown a great man now, and would hardly notice an old acquaintance, especially as he was riding with men of war."

"And you are sure he had a woman with him?" asked Barecolt, resuming his seat and filling his glass.

"A sort of girl, mayhap some sixteen years of age," answered his companion. "She looked somewhat rueful too, with her eyes cast down upon the ground as she rode along."

"That's she," replied Barecolt; "'tis beyond all doubt. What does the dried herring at Hull, I wonder? Let me see. It would take some threescore men to capture Hull, I doubt."

"Threescore!" exclaimed the other; "some thirty thousand, you mean."

Barecolt gave him a look of unutterable contempt. "Four petards," he said, continuing his own calculations in an undertone, "for the outer gate, the bridge, the inner gate, and one to spare, ha! threescore men — half must be musketeers. Well, there is Hughes's company. I will do it."

"You had better not try," answered his companion. "I could tell you a much better plan, if you would strike a bargain in an honest way, and give me half the reward for finding this young woman, as you say there are great folks looking after her."

"Half the reward, thou little Carthaginian!" exclaimed Barecolt. "By my faith! if you have half the reward, you shall have the danger too; and a quarter of it would turn your liver as white as a hen pigeon's."

"Why, I will save you all danger if you will listen to me," answered the small gentleman. "I will tell you my plan, and you shall judge, and whatever risk there is, I will share readily enough. I know all the houses that Dry frequents in Hull; all his haunts, from the store where he used to buy dried beef and neats' tongues salted, to the shop where he used to take the fourth glass of strong waters. If you will put off your swagger and your feathers, clothe yourself like a Puritan, and walk demurely, we will take two companions, slip into Hull with a couple of horseloads of drapery, find out where Master Dry lodges, and while I busy him with a little speculation in his own way, by which I can easily make him believe that he will fill his pockets, you can deal with the girl, and get her out of the city."

"Clothe myself like a Puritan!" said Barecolt thoughtfully; "that is the only difficult part of the affair; for, unless I steal old Major Randal's suit of black, where I am to get a pious doublet I know not. The fifty crowns Lord Walton gave me have been spent on this new bravery, and sundry pottle pots, together with things that shall be nameless, friend Tibbets; but, by my faith! I will go and ask the good lord for more. He will not grudge the pistoles if we can get Mistress Arrah back again to him. He's as fond of her as a hen of her chickens, yet all in honour, Master Tibbets, all in honour, upon my life. I will go this minute, as soon as I have finished this pint;" and again he filled his glass, and drained it at a draught.

He then rose from his seat, and was in the act of saying, "Wait here for me, and I will be back in a minute," when an officer was seen dimly through the smoke, entering by the door on the other side of the room. After gazing round for a moment, from table to table, he exclaimed aloud, "Is one Captain Barecolt here? He is wanted by the king."

"I knew it!" cried Barecolt, giving a towering look at Master Tibbets. "I was sure of it —my great services. Sir, my name is Barecolt, and your very humble servant."

The officer gazed at him with a look of some consideration and surprise. "My good friend," he said, "you seem scarcely fit to obey the king's summons. You have been drinking."

"So does his majesty, I wot, when he is thirsty," replied Barecolt, nothing abashed; "but if it be of proportions you speak, if it be quantity which makes the difference, I will soon remedy the amount of wine within by the application of water without. I am not drunk, sir; I never was drunk in my life. No, sir, nor was I ever the worse for liquor, as it is termed, though often much the better for it. But whenever I find my eyes a little misty, and see a fringe round the candles, or feel the floor move in an unusual manner, or the cups dance without any one touching them, I have a secret for remedying such irregularities, which secret lies, like truth, in the bottom of a well. Hold, tapster! I have drunk wine enough to-night to justify me in calling for water, even in a tavern. Tapster, I say, get me a bucket of cold water from the pump, and put it down before the door, then bring a napkin to take off the superfluous. I remember when I was in the Palatinate going to see the great tun—"

"Sir, we have no time for tales," said the officer drily; "the king waits. Make yourself as sober as you can, and as speedily as possible."

"Sir, I am with you in an instant," rejoined Barecolt. "Master Tibbets, wait here till I come back. You can finish the tankard for me; it is paid for."

Thus saying, he went forth, and returned in a few minutes, buttoning up his collar, with his scattered hair somewhat dishevelled and dripping; and, saying he was ready, he followed the officer, making another sign to Tibbets to wait for his return.

"Who is that fellow?"

"What the devil can the king want with him?"

"Why, it's Captain Barecolt, of Randal's."

"I think the king might have chosen a better man."

"That's a lie. There is not a better man in the service."

"He's a bragging fool."

"I daresay a coward too."

"No, no, no coward, for all his brags."

Such were some of the observations which followed Barecolt's departure with the officer, while they wended on their way through the streets of Nottingham to the king's lodging, whither we shall take leave to follow them. The style and semblance of a court was kept up long after the royal authority was gone; and in the first room which Barecolt entered were a number of servants and attendants. Beyond that was a vacant chamber, and then a small ante-room, in which a pale boy, in a page's dress, sat reading by a lamp. He looked up as the captain and his conductor appeared, but did not offer to move till the officer told him to go in and say to his majesty that Captain Barecolt was in attendance; on which he rose, opened a door opposite, and knocked at a second, which appeared within. Voices were heard speaking; and, after a moment's pause, the boy repeated the signal, when the door was opened, and he made the announcement.

"Let him wait," was the reply; and for about twenty minutes the worthy captain remained, his head getting each moment cooler and freer from the fumes of the wine; but his fancy only became the more active and rampant, and running away with him over the open plain of possibility, without the slightest heed of whither she was carrying her rider. Having already given the reader a sample of her doings with Captain Barecolt in a preceding chapter, we will spare him on the present occasion, especially as it would take much more time to recount her vagaries in the good gentleman's brain than it did for her to enact them.

At length the door opened, and a voice pronounced the words, "Captain Barecolt!" at which sound the captain advanced and entered, not without some trepidation, for there is something in majesty, even when shorn of its beams, that is not to be lightlied by common men.

The king was seated at a table in a small room, with lights and papers before him, and three or four gentlemen were standing round, of whom Barecolt knew but one, even by sight. That one was the Earl of Beverley, who, with a packet of letters in his hand, stood a little behind and on the right of the king. The monarch wore his hat and plume, and the full light was shining on his fine melancholy features, which looked more sad rather than more cheerful for a faint smile that was passing over his lip. His fair right hand lay upon the table, with the fingers clasped round a roll of papers, upon which they closed and opened more than once, while Barecolt advanced to the end of the table with a low bow; and the monarch gazed at him attentively for a few moments.

"Your name is Barecolt?" asked the king at length.

"It is, may it please your majesty," replied the captain.

"You have been much in France, I think?" continued Charles.

"Many years, sire," answered the soldier, "and speak the language as my own."

"Good!" said the king. "With what parts of the country are you most acquainted?"

"With all parts, your majesty," rejoined the captain, who was beginning to recover his loquacity, which had been somewhat checked by the first effect of the king's presence. "I have been in the north, sire, where I fought against Fuentez; and I have travelled all over the ground round Paris. I know every part of Picardy and the Isle of France. Normandy, too, I have run through in every direction, and could find my way from Caudabec to Alençon with my eyes blindfolded. Poitou and Maine I am thoroughly conversant with; and know all the towns on the Loire and in the Orleannois, the passes of the Cevennes, the Forez, and the Vivarais."

But Charles waved his hand, saying, "Enough! enough! Now, tell me, if you were landed on the coast of Normandy, say at Pont au-de-Mer, and had to make your way secretly to Paris, what course would you take?"

"Please your majesty, Pont au-de-Mer is not a seaport," replied Barecolt. The king smiled, and Barecolt continued, "I know it well, and a pretty little town it is, upon the Rille."

"Well, well," said the king; "suppose you were landed at Harfleur, then,—I did but wish to try you, sir,—how would you direct your course for Paris from Harfleur?"

"If I were to go secretly, may it please your majesty," was the reply, "I do not think I should go near Pont au-de-Mer at all, for then I must pass through Rouen, where they are cute and cunning, ask all sorts of questions, and look to passes sharply. No; I would rather take a little round by Lisieux, Evreux, and Pacy, or perhaps keep still further out from the Seine, and come upon Paris by Dreux, Pontchartrain, and Versailles. Then they would never suspect one came from the sea-side."

The king slowly nodded his head with a satisfied air, saying, "I see you know what you speak of, my friend. My Lord of Beverley, this will do. If you wish to ask him any more questions before you trust yourself to his guidance, pray do so."

"Oh no, sire," replied the earl; "I satisfied myself by my conversation with Major Randal before I spoke with your majesty on the subject. He assures me that Captain Barecolt knows France well, and I have had cause to be aware that he is a serviceable companion in moments of danger. There is but one bad habit, which I trust Captain Barecolt will lay aside for the time, that is, too much talking. I am going, sir, to Paris, on business of importance. The road that I know is not now

open to me, and I have need of one to accompany me who is well acquainted with the country through which I have to pass. By his majesty's permission, and on Major Randal's recommendation, I have chosen you, sir, for a service which will be rewarded according as it is well performed. But you must recollect that the least whisper that I am not what I seem may prove my ruin, though it can benefit no other party, as it is to avoid sending despatches that I go myself."

"You need not be afraid, my lord," replied Barecolt; "for, though I am a soldier of fortune, yet it has always been my rule to stick to the cause I first espouse till my engagement be up. If I do sell myself to the best bidder, as soon as I have touched a crown the market is over. I am no more for sale. The goods are disposed of; and if I were to go over to the enemy even for an hour, I should look upon it that I was stealing myself a sort of *felo de se* in the code of honour, which I never did, and never will be guilty of. Then, as for discretion, my lord, I declare upon my word that all the time I am with you I will not utter one syllable of truth. I will be all one tall lie, saving his majesty's presence. You shan't have to accuse me of speaking truth indiscreetly, depend upon it."

"But speaking too much at all, Master Barecolt, may do as much harm," replied Lord Beverley; "a lie is a difficult thing to manage."

"For those who are not accustomed to it, my lord," replied Barecolt, with a low bow; "but I am experienced, sir, and owe my life some twenty times over to a well-managed fiction. Oh, a clumsy lie is a hateful thing, not to be tolerated amongst gentlemen; and a timid lie is still worse, for it shows cowardice; but a good bold falsehood, well supported and dexterously planted, is as good as a battery at any time."

"Not a very creditable sort of weapon," said the king, with a grave brow. "But enough of this, sir. Where to deceive an enemy in open strife, to gain a mighty object, such as security, or conceal one's needful proceedings from the eyes of those who have no right to pry, is the end proposed, some palliation may be found, perhaps, for a deviation from the strict truth. Would it were not sometimes necessary!" he added, looking round, as if doubtful of the approval of all present; "but, at all events, to speak unnecessary untruths is as dangerous as it is foolish, and as foolish as it is wicked."

"May it please your majesty," answered Barecolt, whose self-confidence had now fully returned, "what your majesty says is quite just; but some of these necessary lies I suppose we must tell from the beginning. Neither I nor my lord the earl, I take it, must pass for an Englishman, or there will be no more secrecy. We must both say we are Frenchmen, or Dutchmen, or Italians—a good big falsehood to commence with."

Lord Beverley laughed. "I am afraid, sire," he observed, "we must say no more upon the subject, or we shall have a strange treatise upon ethics; but, however, as we go across the country to embark, I will endeavour to drill my friend here to use his tongue as little as may be, so that we shall be spared more fraud than is needful. I will now take my leave of your majesty, having received my instructions, and by daybreak to-morrow I will be on my way. May God graciously speed your majesty's cause during my absence!" Thus saying, he bent one knee, and kissed Charles's hand, and then, making a sign to Barecolt to follow, he quitted the presence.

"Now, Master Barecolt," said the earl, as soon as they were in the street, "I know you are a man of action. Be with me by four to-morrow. There is something for your preparations;" and he put a small but heavy leathern bag in his hand, adding, "That is all that is needed for a soldier, I know."

"Good faith! I must speak with Lord Walton before I go," answered Barecolt, "though it be somewhat late."

"Well, then, come quick," replied the earl; and he led the way to the lodging of his friend, where, while Barecolt entertained the young nobleman for near an hour in the room below, Lord Beverley passed some sweet though parting moments with bright Annie Walton; and when he left her, her cheek was glowing and her eyelids moist with tears.

CHAPTER XII.

In a remote part of the country—for England had then remote parts and lonely, which are now broad and open to the busy world—rode along, a little before nightfall, a small party of about ten persons. The weather was clear and mild; but there was in the evening light and in the autumnal hues that touch of melancholy which always accompanies the passing away of anything that is bright, whether it be a summer's day or a fair season, a joy or a hope.

The country was flat and unbroken; but, nevertheless, the eye had no scope to roam, for tall, gloomy-looking rows of trees flanked the narrow road on either side, and many similar lines divided the plain into small fields, which they shaded from the sun, except when he towered at his highest noon. A river some five or six yards across, slow almost to stagnation, crept along at the side of the lane, with the current just perceptible in the middle, where the water seemed bright and limpid enough; but farther towards the side the thick weeds were seen rising from the bottom and spreading over the surface, till at the very edge they became tangled into an impenetrable green mass, fringed with flags and rushes. Over the clearer part of the stream darted the busy water-spider, and whirling in the air above were

myriads of gnats, rising with their irritating hum in tall columns, like the sands of the desert when lifted up by the whirlwind. The light was grey and solemn, and one needed to look to the sky to see that the sun had not actually set.

After riding along this road for the distance of about a mile, a large stone, somewhat like a gravestone, appeared on the side opposite to the water; and one of the horsemen, having dismounted to examine what inscription it bore, deciphered, amongst the moss and lichens that covered it, the following agreeable intelligence:—"Here, in the year of grace 1613, and on the 19th day of the month of November, Matthew Peters was murdered by his eldest son, Thomas, who was executed for the same on the 10th of the month of December next ensuing, in the town of Hull, the worshipful John Slackman, mayor. Reader, take warning by his fate. Go and do not likewise."

If the party was sad before, this memento of crime and suffering did not tend to make it merrier: the horseman mounted his horse again, and they rode on in silence for another mile and a half, when, at the distance of about a hundred yards from the road, which, though it was still seen proceeding in a straight line till it lost itself in the shadows, seemed to lead nowhere, so dull and desolate did it look, there appeared a large shady building, to the stone-paved fore-court of which the river formed a sort of moat.

First came a square tower of red brick, edged with stone which had once been white, but now was green; then followed a dull low wall, probably that of some long corridor, for a slated roof hung over it, and two narrow windows gave the interior a certain portion of light. This was succeeded by a large centre, or *corps de logis*, flat and formal, solemn and unresponding, with similar small windows, and a vast deep doorway. Another long low line of brickwork came after, and then another square tower, and then another mass of brickwork, differing from the former in size and shape, but retaining the same style, and displaying the same melancholy aspect. No ivy grew up around it to break the lines and angles. Not a tree was before it to take off its dull formality. All was heavy, and vast, and grave; and to look upon it one could hardly convince one's self, not that it was inhabited, but that it had been cheered by the warm presence of human life for years. No sound was heard, no moving thing was seen, except when one raised one's eyes in search of chimneys, and there one or two tall columns of smoke rose slowly and seriously towards the sky, as if they had made a covenant with the wind not to disturb their quiet and upright course.

Over the water from the stone court that we have mentioned swung a drawbridge, which was half elevated, being hooked up by one of the links of the thick chain that suspended it to the posts on the other side; and here one of the men of the party, for it consisted of both men and women, pulled in his horse, saying,—

"This is Langley Hall, my lord."

"I know," answered Lord Walton, with a sigh. "It is long since I have been here, but I remember it. We see it in an unfavourable hour, dear Annie. It looks more cheerful in the full light."

"Oh, that matters not, Charles!" answered Miss Walton in a gentle tone: "sunshine and shade are within the heart more than without: and I shall find it gay or sad as those I love fare well or ill."

"How shall we get in?" asked Lord Walton; "the drawbridge is half up."

"Oh, there is the bell behind the posts," replied the man who had first spoken; and, dismounting, he pulled a rope, which produced a loud but heavy sound, more like the great bell of a church than that of an ordinary mansion.

Some three or four minutes elapsed without any one appearing to answer this noisy summons; but at length an old white-headed man came out, and asked cautiously, before he let down the bridge, Who was there?

"It is Lord Walton and his sister," answered the young nobleman; "let down the bridge, good man. Lady Margaret expects us."

"Oh, I know that, I know that," rejoined the old servant; but still, instead of obeying the directions he received, he re-trod his steps slowly towards the house. His conduct was soon explained by his calling aloud, "William! William! come and help here! The bridge is too much for one, and here is the young lord and a whole host of people, men, women, and children. Perhaps it is not the young lord after all. He was a curly-pated boy when last I saw him, and this looks like a colonel of horse."

"Time, time, Master Dixon! time may make us all colonels of horse," answered a brisk-looking youth in a tight doublet, which set off his sturdy limbs to good advantage, as he strode forward to the old man's assistance. "Time is a strange changer of curly hair. Doubtless your good dame patted your head some years agone, and called you her pretty boy; and now, if she were to see you, the mother would not know her son, but would call you uncle or grandpapa."

"And so I was a pretty boy—that is very true," answered the old man, coming forward again towards the bridge, well pleased with ancient memories; "and my mother did often pat my head—Lord! I remember it as if it were but yesterday."

"Ah! but you have seen a good many yesterdays since then, Master Dixon," rejoined the young man, following to the edge of the river, with the wise air of self-satisfied youth. "Now, Master Dixon, you unhook while I pull;" and, as the bridge was slowly let down, he added, "Give you good even, my lord. You are welcome to Langley. Good even, lady. You are welcome too, and so are all these pretty dames. My lady will be right glad to see you all."

His words were cheerful, and there is something very reassuring in the gay tones of the human voice. They seem, in the hour of despondency and gloom, to assure us that all is not sadness in the world; that there is truly such a thing as hope; that there are moments of enjoyment, and that the heart is not altogether forbidden to be happy—all matters of which we entertain many doubts when the cloud of sorrow first falls upon us, and hides the brighter things of life from our eyes.

How often is it that the reality belies the outside appearance—if not always, at least generally. In dealing with all things, moral and physical, man deceives himself and is deceived, and never can tell the core by the rind. These are truisms, reader; very trite, very often repeated. I know it; I write them as such; but do you act upon them? or you? or you? Where is the man that does? And if there be a man, where is the woman? The demagogue is judged by his words, the preacher by his sermon, the statesman by his eloquence, the lover by his looks. All seeming—nothing but seeming; and it is not till we come to taste the fruit that we learn the real flavour.

All had seemed dark and gloomy in Langley Hall; and the sadness which Annie Walton had felt in parting with her brother, when strife and danger were before him, had, it is true, though she would not own it, been deepened by the cold aspect of her future habitation. But the man's cheerful tone first raised the corner of the curtain; and when, on entering the wide old hall, she saw the mellow light of the setting sun pouring over a wide champaign country through a tall window on the other side, and covering the marble floor as if with a network of light and shade, while here a bright suit of armour, and there a cluster of well-arranged arms, and there a large picture of some ancient lord of the place, caught the rays and glowed with a look of peaceful comfort, she felt revived and relieved.

The next moment, from a door at the far end on the right, came forth an old lady, somewhat tall and upright, in her long stays, with a coif upon her head in token of widowhood, and her silver-white hair glistening beneath it, but withal a bland and pleasant smile upon her wrinkled face, and fire, almost as bright as that of youth, in her undimmed eye.

She embraced her nephew and niece with all the affection and tenderness of a parent, and, taking Annie by the hand, gazed on and kissed her again, saying,—

"Not like thy mother, Annie, not like thy mother; and yet the eyes—ay, too, and the lips, now you look grave. But, come; Charles, come. See where I sit, with my sole compani for the last five years, except when good Dr. Blunt comes over from Hull to tell me news, or the vicar sits with me for an hour on Friday."

As she spoke she led them into a large room, wainscoted with dark chestnut-wood; and from out of the recess of the window, where the sunshine fell, rose a tall, shaggy deer-hound, and, with steps majestical and slow, walked up to the young lord and lady, examined first the one and then the other with close attention, stretched himself out with a weary yawn, and, taking it for granted all was right, laid himself down again to doze where he had been before.

"See, Charles, see what a shrewd dog he is," cried the old lady: "he knows whom he may trust and whom he may not, in a moment. I had old Colonel Northcote here the other day. What he came for I know not, though I do know him to be a rogue; for Basto there did nought but growl and show his white teeth close to the good man's legs, till he was glad to get away unbitten."

"I sometimes wish we had their instinct, dear Aunt Margaret, rather than our sense," replied her nephew; "for one is often much more serviceable than the other."

"Much keener, Charles, at all events," answered the old lady. "And so you are here at length. Well, I got all the letters, and Annie shall be another in the hall when you are gone; and when she is tired of the old woman she has a sunny chamber, where the robins sing, for her own thoughts; and she shall be free to come and go according to all stipulations, and no question asked, were it to meet a gallant in the wood."

"Nay, Charles, nay," cried Miss Walton, "why did you write my aunt such tales of me? My only stipulation was, indeed, that I might join him whenever a pause came in these sad doings, my dear aunt."

"Oh, you shall be as free as air, sweet nun," replied Lady Margaret. "I never could abide to see a poor bird in a cage, or a dog tied by a chain; and when I was young I was as wild and wilful as my poor sister Ann was staid and good. I have now lived to well-nigh seventy years, still loving all freedom but that which God forbids—still hating all thraldom but that which love imposes. I was long happy, too, in shaping my own course, and I would see others happy in the self-same way. Come, dear child, while Charles disposes of his men, I will show you your bower, where you may reign, queen of yourself and all within it."

Annie followed her aunt from the room, passed through another behind it, and entered a little sort of stone hall or vestibule, lighted from the top. Four doors were in the walls, and a small staircase at the farther end, up which Lady Margaret led the way to the first floor above, where two doors appeared on either hand, with a gallery, fenced with an oaken balustrade running round the hall, at about twelve feet from the ground. Along this gallery the old lady led her young niece, and then through a long and somewhat tortuous passage, which was crossed by another some twenty yards down, that branched off to more rooms and corridors beyond. Then came a turn, and then another passage, and at the

end three broad low steps led up to a large door.

"Dear aunt," said Miss Walton, who had thought her journey would never end, "your house is a perfect labyrinth. I shall never find my way back."

"It is somewhat crooked in its ways, child," answered Lady Margaret; "but you will make it out in time, never fear; that is to say, as far as you need to know it. Now, here is your bower;" and, opening the door, she led Miss Walton into a large room looking to the south-west. The sun had just gone down, and the whole western sky was on fire with his parting look, so that a rosy light filled the wide chamber from a large bay window, where, raised a step above the rest of the room, was a little platform with two seats, and a small table of inlaid wood.

"There I have sat and worked many a day," said the old lady, pointing to the window, "when my poor knight was at the siege of Ostend. We lived together happily for many years, Annie, and it was very wrong of him to go away at last without taking me with him. However, we shall soon meet again, that is some comfort; but I have never dwelt in this room since."

As she spoke, a slow pattering sound was heard along the passage, and then a scratch at the door. "It is Basto," said Lady Margaret; "he has come to see that I am not moping myself in my old rooms. Come in, Basto;" and, opening the door, the dog stalked in, first looking up in his mistress's face and wagging his tail deliberately, and then in that of her fair niece with a similar gratulation.

"Ah, thou art a wise man," said Lady Margaret, patting him on the head. "We are growing old, Basto; we are growing old. My husband brought him from Ireland ten years ago, Annie, and he was then some two years old; so, according to dogs' lives, he is about fifty, and yet see what teeth he has!" and she opened with her thin, fair, shrivelled hands the beast's powerful jaws.

Miss Walton had in the meantime been taking a review of her chamber, which her kind aunt had certainly made as comfortable and gay as might be. The colours of all that it contained were light and sparkling, contrasting pleasantly with the dark panelling which lined the whole house. There were chairs and low seats covered with yellow silk, and curtains of the same stuff to draw across the bay window. There were sundry pieces of tapestry for the feet, covered with roses and lilies, and on either side of the vast oaken mantelpiece hung brushes of many-coloured feathers. But there was no bed; and the next minute, after some further admiration of the dog's teeth, Lady Margaret opened a door on the right of the fire-place, which led into another room beyond, fitted up as a sleeping-chamber, with the same air of comfort as the other. Everything was pointed out to Annie as long as any light lasted, and then the old lady, showing her a third door, observed, "There is a closet for your maids to sleep in; but we must get back, sweet niece, for it is growing dark, and you will fancy goblins in the passage."

Miss Walton laughed, assuring her that she feared nothing but losing her way, and the old lady answered, "Oh, you must learn, you must learn, Annie. 'Tis often good to have a place like this, where one may set search at defiance. In the last reign we had conspiracies enow, God wot! and one poor man, whose head they wanted, was here three days while his enemies were in the house; but they never found him, and yet he walked about at ease."

"Indeed?" said Miss Walton, as they made their way back; "how might that be, my dear aunt? If they searched well in the daylight, I should think there would be little chance of escape."

"More than you know, Annie," answered her aunt drily; "but I will tell you all about it some day. And now I will send up William, who is a clever lad, with your maids, to show them the way, and bring your goods and chattels up. But what is all this loud speaking, I wonder?"

"I know the voice, I think," answered Miss Walton; "but if I am right as to the person, he should have been over the seas long ago."

CHAPTER XIII.

> For England's war revered the claim
> Of every unprotected name:
> And spared, amidst its fiercest rage,
> Childhood, and womanhood, and age.

So sang a great poet and excellent man, but, begging the master's pardon, if War herself spared them, the consequences of war reached them sadly. It never has been, and never will be, that in times of civil contention, when anarchy has dissolved the bonds of law, the fierce passions, which in the breasts of too many are only fettered by fear, will not break forth to ravage and destroy. There never was yet strife without crime, and never will be. Certainly, such was not the case in the civil wars of the great rebellion, and many an act was committed with impunity, under cover of the disorders of the time, of the most black and horrible character. True, the justice still held his seat upon the bench, to take cognizance of all crimes but rebellion; true, mayors and corporations existed in cities, and exercised municipal authority; but the power thus possessed was not unfrequently used for the gratification of the person who held it on the side of the Parliament, and if not held by one of that party, was utterly disregarded by those who were.

Of this fact Mr. Dry of Longsoaken was very well aware; and, after making his escape from the carriages during the skirmish at the

bridge, he had, with the assistance of his companion, dragged poor Arrah Neil along with him, assuring the Parliamentary committee man who accompanied him that he did it solely to deliver the poor girl from the men of Belial with whom she was consorting, and to place her in the hands of a chosen vessel, a devout woman of his neighbourhood, whom he likened, in an irreverent strain, to Anna the prophetess.

Whether his companion put full faith in his sincerity and singleness of purpose or not does not much matter. Captain Batten was not one to quarrel with any one's hypocrisy; and indeed it seemed that a sort of agreement had been made amongst the Roundheads—like that by which men take paper money instead of gold and silver—to let each man's religious pretences pass current as genuine coin, however flimsy might be the materials of which they were made. The real purpose of Mr. Dry was to take poor Arrah Neil back to Bishop's Merton for his own views; and his motives were, as the reader will learn hereafter, of a very mixed character. But, after having wandered about with Batten and Dr. Bastwick for two days, during the course of which he was more than once seen studying a packet of old letters, he expressed a strong desire to go under the escort of some body of Parliamentary troops into Yorkshire, where he declared he had just recollected having some business of importance to transact.

No opportunity occurred for several days, during which time the whole party who had escaped from the Cavaliers, at the invitation of the worthy common councilmen of Coventry, took up their abode for a time in that ancient city, Mr. Dry watching poor Arrah Neil with the closest care, and giving out to the landlady of the inn at which he lodged that she was a poor ward of his, of weak understanding, over whom it was necessary to keep a strict guard.

The pious landlady of Coventry believed every word that Mr. Dry thought fit to tell her. How could she do otherwise, indeed, with so very devout a person? and, to say the truth, the demeanour and appearance of Arrah Neil did not serve to belie the assertions of the old hypocrite who had her in his power. She remained the greater part of each day plunged in deep and melancholy musings; and though she more than once attempted to escape, and said she was wrongfully detained, yet she entered into no long explanations, notwithstanding sundry opportunities afforded her by the hostess, who was not without her share of curiosity. The fit, or, as she called it, the cloud of gloom, had come upon her again. It had passed away, indeed, during the active and bustling time of the march from Bishop's Merton, and so indeed it always did, either in moments when all went clear and smoothly or in times of great difficulty and danger; but still it returned when any of the bitter sorrows and pangs of which every life has some, and hers had too many, crossed her way, and darkened the prospect of the future.

It was not sullenness, reader; it was no gloomy bitterness of spirit; it was no impatience of the ills that are the lot of all; it was no rebellious murmuring against the will of God: neither was it madness, nor anything like it, though she acted sometimes strangely, and sometimes wildly, as it seemed to the common eyes of the world, from a strong and energetic determination of accomplishing her object at the time, joined with the utter want of that experience of the world which would have taught her how to accomplish it by ordinary means. What was it then? you will ask, and may think it strange when I say—*memory*. But so it was: memory, confused and vague, of things long gone before, which formed so strong a contrast with the present, that whenever sorrow or disappointment fell upon her, some former time, some distant scenes of which she knew not the when nor the where, rose up before her eyes, and made even herself believe that she was mad. She recollected bright looks and kind words, and days of happiness and nights of peace and repose, to which she could not give "a local habitation and a name." Were they visions? she asked herself; were they dreams? where could they have occurred? what could they have been? Was it from some book which she had read, she often inquired, that such fanciful pictures had been gleaned, and had then fixed themselves as realities in her mind?

She could not tell; but when such memories rose up, they took possession of her wholly—bewildered, confused, overpowered her. For a time she was a creature of the past; she scarcely believed in the present; she knew not which was the reality—the things gone by, or the things that surrounded her.

During the whole time that she remained at Coventry, this cloud was upon her, and she paid little attention to anything but the continual questioning of her own heart and mind. She attempted, as we have said, to escape—indeed, more than once; but it was by impulse rather than by thought; and when frustrated, she fell at once back again into meditation. She did not remark that Dry treated her in a very different manner from that which he had ever displayed towards her before; that he called her "Mistress Arrah;" that he tried to soothe and to amuse her. She noticed, but without much attention, that different clothing had been provided for her from that which she had been accustomed to wear; but whenever her mind turned from the past towards the present again, her thoughts busied themselves with Charles Walton and his sister, and she would have given worlds to know how it fared with those she loved.

That the victory had been won by the Cavaliers she was aware, but at what price it had been bought she could not tell, and she trembled to think of it. No one, indeed, spoke

to her upon the subject; for Dry was silent, and for reasons of his own he took care that she should be visited by none but the landlady of the inn.

At length two pieces of intelligence reached him on the third day after their arrival in Coventry, which made him resolute to pursue his journey into Yorkshire immediately. The first of these was communicated to him by one of his own servants, to whom he had sent shortly after the skirmish, and was to the effect that the great majority of the people of Bishop's Merton had espoused the royalist cause, and that messengers had arrived from Lord Walton, ordering him to be apprehended immediately if he made his appearance in the place. With this news, however, came the money he had sent for; and on the evening of the same day Dr. Bastwick brought him the second piece of information, which was merely that a troop of the Parliamentary horse would pass through Coventry the following day, on their road to Hull, where Sir John Hotham was in command for the Parliament. It was added that Master Dry might march safely under their escort, and he accordingly spent the rest of the evening in buying horses and equipage for himself and Arrah Neil, and set out the following day on his journey.

The tedious march towards Hull need not be related; during the whole of the way the old man rode beside his charge, plying her with soft and somewhat amorous words, mingled strangely and horribly with texts from Scripture, perverted and misapplied, and graced with airs of piety and devotion, which those who knew him well were quite aware had no share in his dealings or in his heart.

Arrah Neil paid little attention to him, answered seldom, and then but by monosyllables. To escape was impossible, for he had now too many abettors with him, and she was never left alone for a moment, except when locked into a room during a halt. Yet she looked anxiously for the opportunity; and whenever any objects were seen moving through the country as they passed, her heart beat with the hope of some party of Cavaliers being nigh and giving her relief. Such, however, did not prove the case, and about noon of an autumnal day they entered the town of Hull.

Here Mr. Ezekiel Dry separated himself from the troop, with thanks for their escort, and made his way towards the centre of the town, where stood the house of a friend with whom he had often transacted business of different kinds. The friend, however, had since he saw him married a wife, and was absent from the town; and though Mr. Dry assured a demure-looking maid-servant, who opened the door, that his friend Jeremiah had always told him he might use his house as his own, the maid knew Jeremiah better than Mr. Dry, and demurred to receiving any guest during her master's absence.

When the worthy gentleman had finished his conversation, and made up his mind that he must seek an inn, he turned round to remount his horse, and was somewhat surprised to see Arrah Neil gazing round her with a degree of light and even wonder in her look, for which he perceived no apparent cause. The street was a dull and dingy one; most of the houses were of wood, with the gables turned towards the road; and from the opposite side projected a long pole, from which swung a square piece of wood representing, in very rough and rude style, the figure of a swan the size of life. Yet over the dark and time-stained face of the buildings, up the line of narrow street, round the windows and doors carved with quaint figures, ran the beautiful eyes of Arrah Neil, with a look of eager satisfaction which Ezekiel Dry could in no degree account for. They rested principally upon the figure of the swan, however, and as that emblem showed that it was a house of public entertainment, thither Mr. Dry turned the horses' heads, and bade her alight at the door.

Arrah sprang to the ground in a moment, and entered the house with an alacrity which Mr. Dry had never seen her before display. Something appeared to have enchanted her, for she almost outran the hostess, who led the way, saying, "This way, pretty lady—this way, sir." But when she stopped at a door in a long open corridor, Arrah Neil actually passed her, exclaiming—

"No, not that room; I should prefer this;" and, without waiting for an answer, she opened the door and went in.

"Dear lady, you seem to know the house quite well," said the hostess; "but yet I do not recollect having seen your pretty face before."

"Talk not of such vanities," said Mr. Dry, with a solemn tone; "what is beauty but the dust, and fair flesh but as a clod of clay?"

"Well, I am sure!" said the landlady, who was what Mr. Dry would have called a carnal and self-seeking person, but a very good woman notwithstanding. "Ah, sir! what you say is very true; we are all nothing but clods of earth; there can be no doubt of it; it's very true indeed."

Finding her so far docile, Mr. Dry determined to make a still greater impression, in order to ensure that his object of keeping Arrah Neil within his grasp should not be frustrated by the collusion of the landlady. He therefore set to work, and held forth to her upon godliness, and grace, and self-denyingness, and other Christian virtues; touching a little upon original sin, predestination, election, and other simple and easy subjects, with a degree of clearness and perspicuity such as might be expected from his original station and means of information. The landlady was confounded and puzzled; but it was utterly impossible to tell what he really meant by the unconnected images, quotations, and dogmas which he pronounced; she was unconvinced of anything but of his being a vehement Puritan, which she herself was not.

However, as it did not do to offend a customer,

she shook her head and looked sad, and cried from time to time, "Ah, very true! God help us, poor sinners that we are!" with sundry other exclamations, which, though they did not convince Mr. Dry that she had not a strong hankering for the fleshpots of Egypt and the abominations of the Amorites, yet showed him that she was very well inclined to please him, and made him believe that she would fulfil his bidding to the letter.

He accordingly called her out of the room as soon as he thought he had produced his effect, and, explaining to her what he pleased to call the situation of his poor ward, he warned her particularly to keep the door locked upon her, to suffer no one to hold communication with her, and especially to prevent her from getting out, for fear she should throw herself into the water or make away with herself, which he represented to be not at all unlikely.

The hostess assured him that she was deeply grieved to hear the young lady's case. She could not have believed it, she said, she looked so sensible and cheerful.

"Ah," replied Mr. Dry, "you will see her dull enough soon. It comes upon her by fits; but you must attend very punctually to my orders, or something may take place for which you will weep in sackcloth and ashes."

"Oh, sir, I will attend to them most particularly," said the landlady. "What will you please to order for dinner, sir? Had not I better put the lady down a round-pointed knife? Is she dangerous with her hands?"

"Oh no," answered Mr. Dry. "It is to herself, not to others, she is dangerous. And as for dinner, send up anything you have got, especially if it be high-flavoured and relishing, for I have but a poor appetite. I will be back in about an hour; and, in the meantime, can you tell me where in this town lives one Hugh O'Donnell, an Irishman, I believe?"

The landlady paused and considered, and then replied that she really could not tell; she knew of such a person being in the place, and believed he lived somewhere at the west of the town, but she was not by any means sure.

The moment Mr. Dry was gone, the good woman called to the cook, and ordered a very substantial dinner for the party which had just arrived; but then, putting her hand before her eyes, she stood for the space of a minute and a half in the centre of the taproom, as if in consideration; then said, "I won't tell him anything about it: there is something strange in this affair; I am not a woman if I don't find it out." She then hurried up to the room where she had left Arrah Neil, unlocked the door, and went in.

The poor girl was leaning on the sill of the open window, gazing up and down the street. Her face was clear and bright; her beautiful blue eyes were full of intellect and fire; the look of doubt and inward thought was gone; a change had come over her, complete and extraordinary. It seemed as if she had awakened from a dream.

When the landlady entered, Arrah immediately turned from the window and advanced towards her. Then, laying her hand upon her arm, she gazed in her face for a moment so intently that the poor woman began to be alarmed.

"I am sure I recollect you," said Arrah Neil. "Have you not been here long?"

"For twenty years," replied the hostess; "and for five-and-twenty before that in the house next door, from which I married into this."

"And don't you recollect me?" asked Arrah Neil.

"No," replied the landlady, "I do not; though I think I have seen some one very like you before, but then it was a taller lady—much taller."

"So she was," cried Arrah Neil. "What was her name?"

"Nay, I can't tell, if you can't," replied the landlady.

"I know what I called her, but I know nothing more," answered Arrah Neil. "I called her mother—and perhaps she was my mother. I called her mother as I lay in that bed, with my head aching, my eyes burning, and my lips parched; and then I fell into a long, deep sleep, from which I awoke forgetting all that went before, and she was gone."

"Ay!" cried the landlady; "and are you that poor little thing?" and she gazed upon her for a moment with a look of sad, deep interest. The next instant she cast her arms round her and kissed her tenderly. "Ah, poor child!" she said at length, with tears in her eyes; "those were sad times—sad times, indeed! 'Twas when the fever was raging in the country. Sad work in such days for those who lodged strangers! It cost me my only one. A man came and slept in that bed; he looked ill when he came, and worse when he went. Then came a lady and a child, and an old man, their servant, and the house was full, all but this room and another; and ere they had been here long, my own dear child was taken with the fever. She was near your own age, perhaps a year older; and I told the lady overnight, so she said she would go on the morrow, for she was afraid for her darling. But before the morning came you too were shaking like a willow in the wind, and then came on the burning fit, and the third day you began to rave, and knew no one. The fifth day my poor girl died, and for a whole day I did not see you; I saw nothing but my dead child. On the next, however, they came to tell me the lady had fallen ill, and I came to watch you, for it seemed to me as if there was something between you and my poor Lucy—I knew not what; you had been sisters in sickness, and I thought you might be sisters in the grave. I cannot help crying when I think of it. Oh, those were terrible days!" And the poor woman wiped her eyes.

"But my mother?" cried Arrah Neil,—"my mother?"

"Some day I will show you where she lies,"

answered the hostess; and Arrah wept bitterly, for a hope was crushed out to its last spark.

"She got worse and worse," continued the landlady, "and she too lost her senses; but just as you were slowly getting a little better she suddenly regained her mind; and I was so glad, for I thought she would recover too; but the first words she spoke were to ask after you. So I told her you were much better, and all she said was, 'I should wish to see her once more before I die, if it may be done without harming her;' and then I knew that she was going. I and the old servant carried you, just as you were, and laid you on her bed, and she kissed you, and prayed God to bless and keep you; but you were weak and dozy, and she would not have you wakened, but made us take you back; and then she spoke long with the old man in a whisper; but all I heard was, 'You promise, Neil?—you promise on your salvation?' He did promise—though I did not know what it was. Then she said, 'Recollect, you must never tell her unless it be recovered.' Recovered she said, or reversed, I remember not well which; but from that moment she said nothing more but to ask for some water, and so she went on till the next morning, just as the day was dawning, and then she departed."

A short space passed in silent tears on the part of Arrah Neil, while the good woman who told the tale remained gazing forth from the window; but at length she continued, "Before you could run across the floor again, my husband died, but with him it was very quick. He was but three days between health and death; and when I had a little recovered I used foolishly to wish that you could stay with me, and be like my poor Lucy; but you were a lady and I was a poor woman, so that could not be; and in about six weeks the old man paid all that was owing, and took you away. It is strange to think that you should be the same pretty child that lay there sick near ten years ago."

"It is as strange to me as to you," said Arrah Neil; "for, as I tell you, I seemed to fall into a deep sleep, and for a time I forgot all; but since then all the things which occurred before that time have troubled me sadly. It seemed as if I had had a dream, and I recollect a castle on a hill, and riding with a tall gentleman, who was on a great black horse, while I had a tiny thing, milk-white; and I remember many servants and maids—oh, and many things I have never seen since! but I could not tell whether it was real or a mere fancy, till I came into this town and saw the street which I used to look at from the window, and the sign of the house that I used to watch as it swung to and fro in the wind. Then I was sure it was real; and your face, too, brought a thousand things back to me; and when I saw the room where I had been, I felt inclined to weep, I knew not why. Well, well may I weep!"

"But who is this old man who is with you?" asked the landlady suddenly. "He is not the old servant, who was as aged then as he is now; and what is this tale he tells of your being his ward, and mad?"

"Mad!" cried Arrah Neil,—"mad! Oh no! 'Tis he that is wicked, not I that am mad. He and another dragged me away from those who protected me and were good to me,—kind Annie Walton and that noble lord her brother,—while they were fighting on the moors beyond Coventry. I his ward! He has no more right to keep me from my friends than the merest stranger. He is a base, bad man—a hypocrite—a cheat. What he wants, what he wishes, I know not; but he had my poor old grandfather dragged away to prison, and he died by the road."

"Your grandfather!" said the widow. "What was his name?"

"Neil," answered the poor girl; "that was the name he always went by."

"Why, that was the old servant!" said the hostess. "He had been a soldier, and fought in many battles. I have heard him tell it often. But this man—this man has some object, young lady. He knows more of you than perhaps you think. He told me that you were mad, and his ward; but he knew not that you had a friend so near at hand, who, though she be a poor, humble woman— Hark! there are people speaking at the door. 'Tis he, I daresay. Say not a word to him, and we will talk more by and by. Do not be afraid—he shall not take you away again so easily, if there be yet law in the land. But he must not find me with you;" and, thus saying, she opened the door and left the room.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE landlady paused for a moment at the door, laid her finger upon her brow, thought for a minute or two, and then, having settled her whole plan to her own satisfaction, descended to the door, at which Mr. Dry of Longsoaken was making sundry inquiries regarding the personage for whose address he had, in the first place, applied to herself, and whom he evidently had not found out in his perambulations through the town. A part of what he said was heard by the hostess as she descended, so that she had a clue to what was going on, and, advancing towards him with a low, smart curtsey, she said,—

"The dinner's quite ready, sir; and I have been thinking since you were gone that I shall be able to-morrow morning to get you the address of the gentleman you wanted, for a man will be here with eggs who used to supply him, I know."

Mr. Dry looked up with a well-satisfied air, saying, "That is providential, Mistress Green."

"White, sir, White," said the landlady, dropping another curtsey. "My name is White, not Green,—a different colour, sir; but it all comes to the same thing. Shall I call the young lady to dinner? It is in this room, sir."

"I will go myself, Mistress White," said Dry; and he was advancing towards the stairs when the landlady, in a low and confidential whisper, added,—

"Poor thing! she is very wild indeed. I went up just now to see if she wanted anything; and she is quite astray, thinking that she was here not long ago, and fancying that she knows all about the place. It's a sad thing to see a poor creature in such a state."

"Alack! alack! and so it is," rejoined Mr. Dry; "but it's God's will, Mrs. White, and so we must submit."

"Ah, sir, that's very true!" answered the good hostess; "but yet one can't help pitying the poor girl. You are sure she is not dangerous, sir?"

"Quite sure," answered Mr. Dry: "it is only to herself. But if she were left alone to do what she will, I would not answer for it that you would not very soon find her in the Humber."

"Oh, she must be looked to, sir, she must be looked to!" replied the landlady. "Those are sad, dangerous cases. I remember right well when Jonathan Birkett, at Burton,—he was my husband's second cousin, poor dear man,—went mad, and hanged himself—"

"I will hear that story after dinner," said Dry in return, pushing past her, and opening the door of the room in which Arrah Neil was seated. But the good landlady had gained her point, having fully convinced Mr. Dry that she believed the poor girl whom he had brought thither to be perfectly insane; and her manner during the meal, which followed immediately after, served to confirm the worthy gentleman in that supposition, without at all inducing Arrah herself to imagine that her new friend had any doubt of her sanity.

Though the days had gone by when, as a universal custom, the landlord and his guest sat down together at the same table, and when, if the traveller presented himself at any other hours than those of the host's own meals, he was likely to remain hungry till the master of the house chose to eat, yet in all cases he who supplied the fare and he who received it were still much more intimately mixed up at meal times than in the present day, when the duties of the hostly office are done by deputy, and the landlord is intent upon any other cares than hospitable ones.

In the present instance, good Mrs. White remained in the room with her maid, who acted the important part of waiter; and ever and anon she meddled busily with the dishes, commended the viands to her guests, vaunted the excellence of the ale, strong waters, and wine which her house afforded; and, when not thus employed upon matters connected with her own immediate vocation, took part in the conversation of those who sat at table with great freedom and satisfaction.

Towards Arrah Neil her tone was of that tender and kindly character which might well be attributed by Mr. Dry to compassion for the mental affliction under which he had declared her to be suffering, and by the poor girl herself to interest in her fate and situation. But the good landlady was all the time busily engaged in watching eagerly the whole conduct of her male guest, and endeavouring, with all the skill which is afforded by long dealings with many of our fellow-creatures, to extract some information from all she saw regarding his intentions and objects. She perceived that the worthy man of Longsoaken was as tender upon her whom he called his ward as was consistent with his sanctified exterior, that he often whispered a word to her with a smile which contorted his harsh and weazened features into anything but a pleasant expression, and that he made a point of helping her himself to everything which he thought dainty; and, from these and various other indications, Mrs. White was led to ask herself, "Does the old hypocrite seek her for a wife or a paramour?" and she internally added, "I'll spoil the game for him, that I will."

But, notwithstanding her secret resolutions, the good landlady remained perfectly civil and attentive to Mr. Dry; and, guided by tokens, which were not to be mistaken by one of her experience, as to his fondness for certain creature comforts of existence, she at length produced some clear and brilliant liquid, the produce of the Dutch still, in a large flat-sided black bottle, and persuaded him to drink what she called a small glass thereof, though, to say the truth, the measure was very capacious. When he had drunk it, he set down the glass again; and, looking up in Mrs. White's face, observed,—

"It is very good indeed, madam, and may be permitted for the support of our poor weak bodies after a long ride in such bleak and disconsolate weather."

"Take another glass, sir," said the hostess, who stood at the end of the table with the bottle still in her hand.

"On no account—on no account, Mistress White," replied her guest; "we may use such things discreetly, but by no means go into excess. I would not for the world—don't talk of it."

There are two ways, however, of understanding that same injunction, "don't talk of it," which those who have been accustomed to read the book of human nature find no great difficulty in applying properly; and in this instance, as in many others, Mrs. White saw that it meant, "Don't talk of it; but do it without talking," and therefore, replying, "Oh, sir, it's very weak: it's so old, 'tis scarcely stronger than water," she poured the glass full, as it stood at Mr. Dry's elbow, while he turned round to say something to Arrah Neil on his other side.

The worthy gentleman took not the slightest notice of this proceeding; but, looking up in Mrs. White's face, he said,—

"And so you think, ma'am, that you will be able to get me Master Hugh O'Donnell's right address by to-morrow morning?"

"I am certain of it," replied the landlady, who thought there was no great harm in a little confidence, whatever might be the result.

Arrah Neil looked down in silent thought, and then raised her large, bright eyes with an inquiring look in the landlady's face; while Mr. Dry, as if in a fit of absentness, took up the glass and sipped nearly one half of the contents before he recollected what he was about. He then, however, set it down suddenly, and inquired,—

"Pray, can you tell me if Mr. Twigg the drysalter is now in Hull? A God-fearing and saintly man, Mrs. White, who used to hold forth to the edification of a flock that was wont to assemble at the tabernacle in Backwater Alley."

"Oh dear, yes, sir, he is in Hull!" replied Mrs. White. "I saw the good gentleman only yesterday."

"Then I will go down and visit him presently," answered Mr. Dry. "Humble-minded folks may always profit much of godly conversation; and, to do him but justice, he is always ready to use his spiritual gifts for the benefit of others."

Thus speaking, Mr. Dry, after contemplating the glass for a moment, seemed to come to the conclusion that there was no use of leaving in it the little that remained. He accordingly tossed it off with a sudden motion of the hand, and then set it resolutely down upon the table again, as if defying the landlady, the Hollands, or the devil, to tempt him to take another drop.

The fiend and women, however have generally more than one way of accomplishing their object, and consequently Mrs. White, after having pronounced a eulogium on the graces of Mr. Twigg, and his friend Master Theophilus Longbone, the hemp-merchant, who was likewise an acquaintance of her guest's, she set down the bottle carelessly by Mr. Dry's side, and retired into a little room, with a glass window towards the passage, so constructed as to afford a view of the door of the house, with those of the chambers on the ground floor, and also of the foot of the stairs.

Here she remained for about half an hour, while sundry persons came in and out, spoke to her or to some of her attendant satellites, paid money, received change, brought in goods for sale, amongst which it may be as well to record six pairs of very fine pigeons in a basket, or applied for small quantities of cordials, which sometimes they drank upon the spot, sometimes carried away in phials.

At length the door of the room in which Mr. Dry had eaten his dinner opened, and that worthy gentleman appeared, holding Arrah Neil by the arm, and looking at her with a somewhat inflamed and angry countenance, from which Mrs. White augured that he was about to say something harsh and bitter to his fair companion. She prepared accordingly to interfere, fully resolved to protect the poor girl at all risks, even if she were obliged to call in the aid of the magistrates, town-council, and governor himself; although, to say the truth, she had no great love or reverence for any of the party now dominant in Hull.

Mr. Dry, however, uttered not a word, but led his poor victim up to her chamber, made her go in, and, locking the door, took out the key. Mrs. White smiled, as with quick ears she heard the various steps of this process, but sat quite still at what we should now call the bar, and marked the movements of Mr. Dry, as he descended and stood for a moment in the passage — those movements being somewhat peculiar, and indicating an internal perturbation of some sort. His back, indeed, was turned towards the worthy hostess, as he looked out of the door leading into the street; but she perceived that, with his feet somewhat apart, he first rested on his heels, then upon the soles, then upon his heels again, his body gently swaying backwards and forwards, and his hands in his breeches-pockets. Mrs. White had seen such oscillations before in other men; and when Mr. Dry made up his mind to the course he was to pursue, and walked straight out into the street, she herself hastened into the eating-room, where the first object that she examined was the black bottle, which, being held up to the light, exhibited a deficiency of at least one-half.

"Ay, the beast is well-nigh drunk," said Mrs. White, speaking to herself; "but that's a small matter, if he does no more than get tipsy now and then. I'll warrant he'll be in a fine state when he comes home from Master Twigg's. He's just such another as himself; and they sit there and drink and cant till they all go home crying or quarrelling, as if they were the most unhappy men in the world. Well, religion is a good thing in its way, and drink is a good thing; but they don't do mixed, anyhow."

Thus saying, she carried off the black bottle, placed it in its own peculiar receptacle, and then, calling a girl whom she named Nancy to take her place in the bar, she walked quietly up to the room of Arrah Neil.

It may be recollected by the reader that Mr. Dry had carefully locked the door and put the key in his pocket; but Mrs. White was not a person to be frustrated by such a simple proceeding, for, putting her hand to her girdle, from which hung a ponderous bunch of variously formed pieces of iron, she selected one from the rest, which, being insinuated into the keyhole, instantly turned the lock, and gave her admission to the chamber without the slightest difficulty.

Arrah Neil started up with a look of joy, brushing away some drops that had gathered in her eyes, and exclaiming, "I am so glad!"

"What, poor soul!" cried Mrs. White; "you thought he had shut you up so that nobody could get to you. But I am not such a fool as to be without a master-key in my own house, so that if any other be lost I can always open a door. What has the old man been saying to you, my dear? and what made him look so cross?"

"Oh," replied Arrah Neil, "he has been saying things I do not understand; and then he asked if I would marry him, and said that, if I would, I should have all his money at his death; but I told him that, if he had all the wealth in the world, I would sooner die."

"Ay, that's what made him cross," cried the landlady. "Men do not like such words as those, my dear. However, you did very right; for the sooner you let the old hypocrite know your mind the better. He's a deep old villain, though, or I am mistaken. I saw you looked at me when he mentioned Hugh O'Donnell. Do you know anything about him? Do you recollect the name?"

"Yes, I do," replied Arrah Neil. "I am sure I have heard it often, but it must be long ago. Who is he? What is he?"

"Nay, that I can't tell," answered Mrs. White. "I recollect him here, I think, in my husband's time; and I have seen him about once or twice since then in the streets of the town and in the market. But I know nothing of him, except that he is a good sort of man, I believe. One sees such a number of people in a town like this! He's got a ship, I believe, and trades to Ireland."

"To Ireland!" said Arrah Neil. And then, suddenly breaking off, she added, "I wish I could get away. Cannot you let me out while he's gone?"

"Oh, that I can, my pretty lady!" answered the hostess; "and you shall go away whenever you like. I won't stop you. But I think it will be a great deal better for you to stay a while and see what all this comes to. We may find out something that may clear up the whole business; and, besides, what would you do if you were away? Without money, you would be in a sad plight; and I daresay he does not let you have any in your pocket."

"I have two crown-pieces," replied Arrah Neil; "and with that I am sure I could get to Annie Walton and her brother."

The widow shook her head with a sad smile. "'Tis a small sum to begin the world with," she said, "and all alone. Besides, they might overtake you. No, no, poor thing! leave it to me to settle some plan for you. I will answer for it, he shall not take you away from here, let him do what he will; and in the meantime I will set my wits to work to find out the whole of this story. But now let me hear who are this Annie Walton and her brother. Come, sit down by me, and tell me all you can recollect since the times we were talking of this morning. It may help me to find out the rest, and that's the point."

Arrah Neil mused; not that she had any hesitation in relating to her companion all that her memory served to recall; for it is not those who have new friends that are suspicious, but those who have had friends that have proved false. She had too rarely met with the voice of kindness and sympathy not to yield her ear to it willingly, especially when it came from one who was linked to the sad but sweet recollections of the past. She had lived so long in a dream, however,—a dream from which nothing but the most important scenes and figures had stood forth in full light,—that much was confused and indistinct, and she felt that she could but relate it as it presented itself to remembrance, which she feared might afford but a faint and misty image to a stranger. It was with the good widow's first question, then, that she commenced making her reply. "Annie Walton!" she said; "I wonder you have never heard of her, she is so kind and so good; every one knows her by her bounties."

"Ay, but if I understand right, my poor young lady, she lives a long way off on the other side of Coventry," replied the hostess; "and while wicked doings travel on horseback, the report of good ones trudges afoot. Like the waggoner's cart, it may be richly loaded, but is long a-coming."

"Well, then," answered Arrah Neil, "she is Lord Walton's daughter, sister of kind Charles Walton, who is now lord. The old man died two years ago, and the lady long before that. However, they have always been good to me, and to my poor old grandfather, ever since we went to live at Bishop's Merton. 'Tis a long while ago now; and between the time when I was here and the days I first recollect there, there seems a sort of gap, as if we had lived somewhere else. But I remember well our first arriving there, and going with my grandfather to look at two or three cottages, till at length he chose one just out of the town, upon the green, by the old church."

"Were you then quite alone with him as you went from Hull?" asked the landlady.

"Quite," answered Arrah Neil. "There was no one with us, and we lived there quite alone; and all the morning my grandfather used to teach me all he knew, and to make me read and write many an hour, and copy things out of books, and explain to me about different countries. I often thought it wearisome, for it used to keep me from thinking of things that were past, and from trying to bring back to mind people and places that seemed to cross my sight in haste and disappear again like the motes that we see in the sunshine, which are lost as soon as they get into the shade. But he was a good, kind old man, and everybody loved him. The boys used to gather round him on the green at evening close, and listen to the stories he used to tell of the wars in Ireland; and Lord Walton, from whom he hired the cottage, was very kind too, and often used to stop and talk with him as he went by; and Charles, the young lord, and Miss Walton did the same. I used very often to go up to the house, too, and spent many a happy day there, though I sometimes fancy that, on account of my strange ways, and because I often fell into fits of thought, they believed I was somewhat weak in mind; but, if I could have seen this house, it would have soon

brought my brain right. But, as I was saying, they were always very kind to me; and Charles Walton would spend many an hour at the cottage and listen to my grandfather's tales."

"Ay," said the hostess, "he was an old soldier, but he did not understand all the arts of war."

Arrah Neil looked up in her face with an inquiring air, but good Mrs. White only shook her head, and the poor girl proceeded. "Charles Walton was away in strange countries for a long time, and then again he went to the wars; but whenever he came back he used to visit us, though he grew graver and more thoughtful as he became older than he was when he was a youth and I was a child; and I began to feel somewhat afraid of him—no, not afraid, for he was always kind Charles Walton to me, but I felt timid when he spoke to me. However, his father died, and he became lord of all the country round, and he had much to do and was often away. About that time, this man, who is now here in Hull, began to come sometimes to the house, but my grandfather could not bear him; and though he treated him civilly, because he was now in great power in the little town, and every one seemed to do just as he bade him, and all were afraid of him, yet he was always cold and distant to him. One day, however, this Ezekiel Dry came in while he was out, and he took me by the hand and began to say things I did not understand, as he did to-night, and I tried to go away, but he would not let me. Just then my grandfather came in, and immediately there were high and threatening words; and my grandfather struck him with the staff he carried, and knocked him down upon the ground; then, taking him by the arms, he cast him out of the cottage like a dog. After that he did not come again for many months; and in the winter my poor old grandfather was taken ill, and remained ever after feeble and sickly; and when he used to hear of the doings of the Parliament against the king, it always made him worse, and he used to speak rash words, I fear. Once or twice he wrote letters, and sent them off by a man that sometimes came to see him, and he received answers, too, which he burned as soon as he had read them. So it went on, till one day this summer the man Dry came with a number of soldiers, when my grandfather was very ill in bed, and said they had a warrant against him as a malignant who was plotting treason against the Parliament, and they dragged him away in spite of all I could say, though I told them it would kill him. Lord Walton was absent then, and Dry would fain have prevented me from going with my grandfather; but one of the soldiers was kinder than the rest, and said I should go to tend the poor old man. They put us in a cart and carried us along, and day by day he grew weaker, till at length at Devizes he died. Before his death, however, just when his eyes were turning dim, he whispered to me, 'Go back quick to the cottage, Arrah, and in the back room, behind the bed, you will find a bundle of letters and other things, which will tell you all about yourself—I cannot;' and he said no more."

"Did you find them? did you find them?" cried the landlady eagerly.

"No," answered Arrah Neil; "for when I got back to the cottage it had been stripped of everything, and I too had been robbed of all I had taken with me by the soldiers on the road. One of them said that my gown was pretty, and he would have it for his wife; so I gave it to him for fear he should take it by force."

The good hostess had mused, paying little attention to the last few words, but at length she exclaimed, "He has got them, young lady. He has got those letters, depend upon it; ay, and he knows more of you than any of us. You must find means to get them back again; that is the only thing to be done."

"Alas! how can I?" cried poor Arrah Neil. "I am a mere prisoner, and unable to do anything for myself. Oh, if I could but escape, I should be content!"

"Nay, nay, be not so impatient," said Mrs. White; "you shall escape in good time—I give you my word for that; but let us first find out all that we can, for I have a notion that your fortunes are better than they look, or else this man would not be so eager to keep you in his hands. You were no grand-daughter of old Sergeant Neil's—that I can tell you, and you may turn out a great lady after all. I am sure your poor mother looked and spoke like one of the best of the land, and I do not see why you should not have your rights as well as another."

"A great lady!" said Arrah Neil in a musing tone, and with a melancholy shake of the head: "there is but one reason why I should like to be a great lady, and that is, to show my gratitude to those who have been kind to me."

"And a good reason, too," replied the landlady. "So you must not miss your chance, my dear."

"Dame White! Dame White!" cried a voice from below.

"Hark! they are calling me," said the hostess; and, opening the door, she exclaimed, "Here am I; what do you want with me, Nancy?"

"Here are a heap of folks want to see you directly," screamed Nancy from the bottom of the stairs.

"I must go, my dear," said the widow, turning to Arrah Neil, "but I will be back with you directly;" and thus saying she left her.

But poor Arrah was disappointed in regard to the length of her absence, for more than an hour passed, and the door gave admission to no friendly face.

CHAPTER XV.

We must now, dear reader, turn to other scenes and personages, and pause, somewhat long perhaps, ere we resume the actual history of poor Arrah Neil; for those voices that were heard

below, as we mentioned at the end of the first volume, and the long absence of the landlady, though they may seem simple enough, yet require some longer comment than appears necessary at first sight, and are not unconnected either with the past or future portions of this history.

There is upon the Yorkshire coast, somewhat to the south of Flamborough Head, a small, retired bay, not above a quarter of a mile broad, but deep in relation to the width; for the distance from each of the projecting headlands by which it is formed, to the innermost part of the bay, is nearly three-quarters of a mile. This little natural haven is furnished with a sandy shore, and surrounded by steep rocks at all points but that where it is united with the ocean and at the mouth of a short narrow valley, which leads with a rapid ascent to the tops of the cliffs above. Were it not that it is so difficult of access from the land side, and that the water therein is somewhat shallow, it might form an excellent port, sheltered from almost all winds. But these circumstances have rendered it less frequented than it might be; and, though a few boatmen's cottages are now built upon the shore, it is but little known, and at the time I speak of was without any vestige of human habitation, and rarely trodden by the foot of man.

At about three o'clock, however, of an autumnal night, a boat might be dimly discovered lying on the sandy shore, the tide being then at ebb. In it were four men apparently sailors, two of whom were stretched sound asleep in the stern, whilst two sat talking together in low tones on the gunwale of the boat, supplying the intervals of conversation by manifold potent whiffs of the meditative pipe.

As neither the topics they discussed nor the language that they used would be either pleasant or edifying to the reader, we shall not pause upon their discourse, but leave them smoking and talking on, to follow two horsemen down from the entrance of the valley, as, at a slow and cautious pace, they were guided on by a youth some fifteen or sixteen years of age, who, in the hope of a proportionate recompense, took care to point out to them the various obstacles that lay in the way. Now it was a mass of rock, now a large fissure, now a sudden descent, now the course of the little brawling stream, somewhat swelled by the rain which had fallen in the early part of the night.

But all these difficulties were at length overcome, though the one said to the other that it put him in mind of the Pass of Roncesvalles, and the other replied, "As much like Roncesvalles, my good friend, as a Cheshire cheese is to the Peak of Derby. But pray recollect your taciturnity. It will not do to break out now. There is the boat, I see;" and, advancing over the sand, he spoke a few words to one of the men who was awake, and who replied with the common and significant answer, made by Englishmen on so many different occasions, of "All's right, sir."

The other man, in the meanwhile, roused up their two companions; and the horsemen dismounted from their beasts and put the bridles into the hand of the youth who had served them as a guide. The one who appeared to be the principal personage of the party seemed to add a piece of money to that which he placed in the lad's palm, saying, "Mind you lead them back carefully, and he will give you the same when you deliver the horses to him in good condition."

The young man thanked him warmly, and promised all manner of care. The two cavaliers having placed themselves in the stern of the boat, it was easily pushed off into the sea, which was there calm and tranquil; and the sailors, springing in, took to their oars and pulled away towards the mouth of the bay.

Speedily the little boat began to show that all was not quite so smooth beyond the point, tossing up and down as they approached the open sea, and labouring with the eddies produced by the contending wind and tide amongst the scattered rocks which stood out from the headland. When they had once issued forth upon the bosom of the wide ocean, they found a heavy sea running, and the wind directly contrary to the course they wished to steer, so that but little way was made, notwithstanding the sturdy strokes of the rowers, and day began to dawn before they were a mile from the bay.

The first light of the morning showed them, what they had not before perceived, a small cutter lying at anchor, still at the distance of a mile and a half or two miles; and as they appeared likely to be some hours before they reached her, the one gentleman whispered to the other, "Let us give these poor fellows some relief, Barecolt. You take one oar, and I can take another, and then those who rest can relieve the other two after a while."

"With all my heart, mon colonel," replied Captain Barecolt, "though this water-work is neither your trade nor mine."

The proposal of Lord Beverley was soon propounded to the men, and gladly enough adopted; but still a considerable time elapsed before they reached the little cutter, which hoisted sail and put to sea as soon as they were on board.

The morning was fair, with a strong wind blowing, not the most favourable that could be conceived for the course which they were destined to pursue, but still not directly contrary, and they made their way slowly on through the dashing billows, at the rate of some three or four miles in the hour. Lord Beverley and his companion, Barecolt, walked the deck, speaking little to each other or to the rest, and the peer keeping a watchful eye upon the loquacious captain, to make sure that he did not give way to his talkative propensities in favour of the skipper or any of the mariners of the ship.

It was evident that the two passengers were perfectly unknown to their shipmates, both from the manner in which the latter examined them when they came on board, and from the fact of

Lord Beverley, whenever he did speak, conversing with Barecolt in French, and addressing the master of the vessel in broken English. The persons of the two gentlemen also were disguised, as far as mere clothing went. Barecolt, for his part, was dressed in a sober-coloured grey suit, with a buff belt, and a black hat and feather. The whole was in very good keeping, except in respect of certain red ribbons, which his taste for finery could not forbear from applying to various parts of his dress; and he might have well passed for a respectable French citizen, somewhat given to the juice of the grape, and not very affluent in his circumstances.

The earl was habited more richly, but in a very different style from that of an English cavalier; and although the pointed beard was still in fashion in England, he had sacrificed that ornament of the human countenance to bring himself to the likeness of certain young French nobles, who at that time were labouring zealously to exclude beards from fashionable society; and who had so far succeeded that, not long after, one of the old French court, who adhered to the custom of nature and his ancestors, was known by the name of "the man with the beard." This change had made a very great difference in his appearance, which he had increased by dyeing his hair and moustache of a darker hue, so that none but those who knew him intimately would have recognised him without very close inspection.

After sailing on for about two hours, making their way slowly from the English coast, which, however, was still seen rising in long lines above the waters, a large vessel was perceived bearing direct towards them, with all sails set, while a fleet, apparently of fishing-boats, were coming upon the other tack.

The master of the schooner seemed to pay but little attention to either; but Lord Beverley felt some anxiety, and not a little impatience, to ascertain the character of the large vessel, as a ship named the *Good Hope*, laden with ammunition, money, and stores, had been daily expected on the coast for the last fortnight, and he had been directed by the king to instruct the officers on board, if he met her on his passage on no account to trust themselves in Hull, the governor of which had openly declared for the Parliament. The master, however, continued to walk up and down the opposite side of the deck, merely giving a casual glance to the other vessel, till the earl crossed over and inquired if he knew the ship that was approaching.

"She is a king's ship," replied the man, with a sort of dull taciturnity, which sailors sometimes affect towards landsmen, especially if they are of a different nation.

"But is it the *Good Hope?*" demanded the earl. "If so, I am commanded to board her."

"It looks like her," replied the captain, continuing his walk; "but we shall soon know, and then you can do as you like."

Ere many minutes were over, the captain pronounced the vessel to be the *Good Hope;* and, as they approached somewhat nearer, a signal was made, upon which the cutter brought to, and, the boat being lowered,—the only one which she possessed,—the earl proceeded to the other ship, taking with him our good friend Captain Barecolt, rather (to use a familiar expression) to keep him out of harm's way than for the pleasure of his society.

Although signals had been made and answered, it was evident that the people on board the large vessel viewed the approach of the little boat with some suspicion, believing, as the earl found, that the object was but to detain them till some larger force arrived. There were several persons at the gangway, watching eagerly the approach of the visitors, and not a little puzzled did they appear by the appearance of the earl and his companion when the boat ran alongside. The earl looked up and smiled, for he recognised not a few of those who stood upon the deck above as personal acquaintances of his own and faithful servants of the king.

With a slow step, however, and a grave face, he climbed the vessel's side; but when once he stood upon the deck, removed from the eyes and ears of the boatmen, he stretched out a hand to two gentlemen who stood on either side, saying,—

"Welcome, Pollard!—welcome, Berkeley! You have been long looked for."

"By my life, the Earl of Beverley!" cried Colonel Ashburnham, who stood beyond. "Why, oons, man! who would have known you in that black wig?"

"My own hair, I assure you," replied the earl. "Do not libel it, Ashburnham; there is not a hair on my head that is false. But I can stay only a moment, for I am bound for France on the king's service; and I have it in command to tell you on no account to venture into Hull. Sir John Hotham holds with the Parliament, and, as a new convert to treason, is likely to make a merit of any violent act. You must give me your news, however. Tell me what succour you bring to the king, and what support you find in Holland."

"To France!" said Ashburnham thoughtfully. "I wish to heaven you would give me a passage, Beverley; for his majesty can do without me for a time, and I can serve him better there than here. I was but now casting about in my mind which way I should get across as soon as I landed."

"That is easily done," answered the earl. "But you must make haste; I can stay for no packing; for, to say truth, I love not the look of all this fleet of boats, some of them well-nigh as big as our cutter there; and, mark you, there are two large vessels just appearing round the point."

"Well, I am with you in a moment," replied Colonel Ashburnham; "and as for news, I will tell you all as we sail along."

Thus saying, he descended for what he called a moment to the cabin, while the earl remained upon deck, and gathered from the gentlemen

who stood round the tidings that they brought from Holland. The colonel, however, was somewhat longer than Lord Beverley could have desired, as he watched with no unreasonable apprehensions the nearer approach of the boats, and the growing distinctness of three large vessels, as they came scudding along with a fair wind from the side of Hull.

"Ashburnham! Ashburnham!" he cried at length, approaching the cabin-stairs; "on my life, I can stay no longer! Every minute is full of danger."

"Here I am!" cried Colonel Ashburnham. "I have been only securing my papers;" and the moment after he appeared on the deck, with two large leathern bags in his hand, which were cast into the boat; and, with a brief farewell to those on board, and a recommendation to make all sail, the earl descended the ship's side, followed by his friend. The sailors were ordered to pull back as fast as possible to the ship; and, whispering to his new companion to forget him as Lord Beverley, and merely to know him as a French officer with whom he had casually become acquainted, the earl introduced Barecolt to him as Captain Jersval, an officer from Brittany.

Whatever conversation they might have had, if time and opportunity had served, was cut short by the evident signs of an enemy's approach, displayed both by the boats and the ships which they had seen. Signals that the cutter did not understand, and could not answer, were made by the larger ships; and before the earl and his companion were half-way from the *Good Hope* to his own vessel, the former was in full sail away, and a shot was fired across the bows of the latter, as a notification to lie to.

The rowers plied their oars with all the vigour and activity which the necessity of the case required, but it was in vain. Ere they had reached the ship's side, the master had quietly hauled down his colours as sign of surrender.

"This is infamous!" cried Ashburnham. "The cowardly vagabond! What's to become of us now?"

"Faith, we must take our chance," replied the earl; "perhaps we may prevail upon him yet to make sail. At all events, I must destroy some letters I have on board; and perchance I may escape unknown, even if I be taken into Hull; for I do not think that Hotham and I ever met more than once."

"I have no such luck," answered Ashburnham; "he knows me as an old enemy—a thing not so easily forgotten as an old friend. But I will not spoil your fortune, Beverley. Remember we never met before, mon colonel, and if this good gentleman would take my advice," he added, turning to Barecolt, "he would follow the same plan, which is the only way for safety, depend upon it."

"Oh, I will be strangely ignorant," replied Barecolt; "but I thought I heard you talk of papers in those bags, sir. The sea is a more quiet place at the bottom than at the top."

"Right! right!" cried Colonel Ashburnham. "Hand me that grappling-iron, my man," he continued, speaking to one of the sailors.

The man obeyed; and, fastening one of the leathern bags he had brought with him to the hook of the iron, Colonel Ashburnham pitched them both into the sea together, just as the boat ran alongside the cutter.

CHAPTER XVI.

"In the name of fury, you scoundrel," exclaimed Colonel Ashburnham, addressing the captain of the cutter, as soon as they reached the deck, "what made you strike and reef the sails?"

"Because I couldn't help it," replied the man. "They are to windward of us, and will be alongside of us in no time. If you come to that, what made that gentleman stay so long? and who the devil are you who come to give orders here?"

He added a number of oaths, which are not necessary to be repeated. But Colonel Ashburnham waved his hand, saying, "Silence, sir! I thought I was known by everybody who even pretends to serve the king. I am Colonel Ashburnham, an officer in his service, and I order you, if there be a chance of getting away, to make sail instantly."

"There is no chance," answered the man.

"No, sir, not now," said a seaman who stood near; "for nothing is ready. If we had not reefed the sails indeed—"

"Well, well," said Colonel Ashburnham, "what must be must be. Where are the Frenchmen?"

"There stands one," said the captain sullenly, "and the other has gone down below."

"If you have anything to destroy, sir," said the colonel, addressing Barecolt in French, "you had better go and do it at once."

"I have nothing on earth, sir," replied Barecolt, "but a score or two of crowns, a grey doublet, and two shirts—all of which I would sooner destroy on shore than on the water at any time. I have a grand objection to that element in every shape and in every quantity, from a jugful to the Atlantic."

"Your nose vouches for your truth," replied Ashburnham, with a low bow; for he was a man who, notwithstanding the sterner and more devoted points of his character, could understand and appreciate a joke.

"You are right, colonel," replied Barecolt, laying his hand upon his proboscis. "An honest man never fears to bear a witness of his actions about with him."

"Had you not better," said Ashburnham in a lower tone, "go down and see if you can help your companion?"

"With all my heart," answered Barecolt, "though I think what he is about he can do without help; but I will go and tell him that the big black monster there is coming up more

like a swallow than a whale, and that may hasten his proceedings."

Thus saying, he descended into the cabin, but speedily returned, laughing, and saying in broken English, "He is mortally sea-sick, poor miserable! I thought he would be so in the boat."

"Ay, it is the motion of the ship lying-to," replied Ashburnham aloud; "but, on my life, this is a bad affair for me. You two gentlemen, I daresay, they will let go as strangers, but I am unfortunately too well known. Here they come, however, and we shall soon know the worst."

A moment after the headmost ship of the enemy brought-to, and, while the others sailed on after the *Good Hope*, a boat was immediately despatched to take possession of the cutter, and the deck was crowded in a few minutes with seamen from Hull.

The leader of the party recognised Colonel Ashburnham at once, and laughed when he saw him, exclaiming, "Ha, ha! we have got something for our chase, however. Who is there on board besides, colonel?"

"I really cannot tell, sir," answered Colonel Ashburnham gravely; "I have just got into this unfortunate vessel from the other ship, and know nothing of anybody on board but that fellow," and he pointed to the captain, "who is evidently one of three things."

"What, sir?" exclaimed the captain, looking at him fiercely.

"Fool, coward, or traitor," exclaimed Colonel Ashburnham calmly.

The man sprang towards him; but the officer of the boat interposed, exclaiming, "Peace, peace! No quarrelling amongst prisoners. Run down, run down, some of you, and see who is below. Bring up all the papers, too, and then put about the ship for Hull."

The men bustled about for a minute or two, executing these orders, till at length one of them returned up the ladder, carrying some papers in his hand; and another followed, bearing the portmanteau of Lord Beverley, and a small leathern pouch or wallet containing the worldly goods and chattels of worthy Captain Barecolt. Colonel Ashburnham's baggage was upon the deck; and with very summary haste the crew of the Parliamentary ship proceeded to examine the contents of the whole, while Barecolt poured forth a multitude of French lamentations over what he appeared to think was preliminary to the plunder of his property.

"There, hold your howling!" cried the officer of the boat. "Nobody is going to take any thing, unless it be the papers."

"I have no papers," cried Barecolt in broken English, "except that brown paper round about my crowns; give me the silver, and take the brown paper if you like."

"There, monsieur! take your crowns, paper and all," cried the officer, handing them to him. "We are no robbers in this country. Did you find any one below?" he continued, addressing the man who brought the portmanteau.

"Nobody but another poor French lubber, lying upon the floor as sick as a cat," answered the sailor. "I shook him by the shoulder, and told him to come up, but I believe he would let me throw him overboard sooner than budge."

"Ay, let him stay, let him stay!" answered the officer. "I will go down and see him in a minute. What's in that leather case?"

"Nothing but my clothes, writing materials, and a trifle of money," replied Colonel Ashburnham; "and if you wish to examine it, I will beg you to use the key rather than that marlin-spike, for I don't know whether the smiths are good in Hull. Here is the key."

While all these operations were going on, the boat's crew had been busily engaged in navigating the ship towards Hull; and the vessel to which she had struck, seeing the prize secure, made sail to assist in the chase of the *Good Hope*.

Although the wind was not very favourable, it was sufficiently so to bring them into the port of Hull just as night was beginning to fall, and in a few minutes the deck was crowded with officers of the garrison, and a party of the train-bands of the city—the only force, indeed, which the Parliament had prepared for its defence, the cavalry which had arrived a short time before having been marched out to other quarters almost as soon as they entered. Colonel Ashburnham, whose name was soon noised about, became an object of general attention, and much less notice was taken of good Captain Barecolt than that worthy gentleman imagined he deserved. He consoled himself, however, with the reflection that the rabble of Hull neither knew him nor the many wonderful achievements which he had performed, and that it was as well occasionally to divest one's self of a portion of one's glory, in order to escape from too close observation.

Lord Beverley passed with as little attention; and an officer who was sent to state the case to the governor reported, first, that the famous Colonel Ashburnham was amongst the prisoners, but the other two were Frenchmen, apparently of no great importance, and one of them so sick that he could scarcely stand.

"Bring Colonel Ashburnham before me immediately," replied the governor, "and the Frenchman who is well. He can give us tidings of himself, and of his companion too, most likely. Put the other one in the blockhouse we strengthened yesterday till he is well enough to speak for himself. Let him have whatever is necessary for him, and mind to keep a sure guard over him."

These orders were immediately obeyed; and while Lord Beverley, pretending to be still very ill from the effects of his voyage, was suffered to lie on the cabin-floor till he could be led to a blockhouse which had been fortified near the water-gate of the city, Colonel Ashburnham and the magnanimous Captain Barecolt were marched up to the residence of the governor and speedily introduced to his presence.

Of Sir John Hotham himself we cannot give a better account, and in all probability should give a much worse one, than that which has been furnished by the celebrated historian of the great rebellion:—

"Hotham," says Lord Clarendon, with those remarkable powers of delineating human character which probably Theophrastus himself possessed in a very inferior degree, "was by his nature and education a rough and rude man, of great covetousness, of great pride, and great ambition, without any bowels of good nature, or the least sense or touch of generosity. His parts were not quick and sharp, but composed, and he judged well. He was a man of craft, and more like to deceive than to be cozened."

Such was the man, according to Lord Clarendon's account, before whom Colonel Ashburnham was now brought; and there being, as he had said to the Earl of Beverley, some enmity existing between the family of Hotham and himself, he might well expect to be treated with very scanty ceremony and kindness. Nevertheless, to his surprise, he was received with a good-natured air, and a shake of the hand, Hotham exclaiming,—

"Welcome, colonel! welcome!—though, to say the truth, I wish to heaven you had not put yourself in the way of our ships, or that the people had let you go."

"The latter unfortunate case can soon be remedied, Sir John," said Colonel Ashburnham, "by your doing what they left undone, and letting me go yourself."

"I fear not, colonel; I fear not," replied Hotham. "We have got some great rogues here," he added in a lower tone, "who look after me more sharply than I look after them, otherwise I would let you go at once, upon my honour, and will do it yet if I can."

"Well, I thank you, Sir John, for the intention, at all events," answered Ashburnham; "and it is the more gratifying to me, as I always had a regard for you, notwithstanding my quarrel with your son, which you took up so warmly at one time,"

"Ah, the knave!" said Hotham; "I have found him out since that time; and now he has come down here to act as spy and controller against his own father. But who have you got there? Is he one of your people?"

"Oh no," answered Ashburnham; "some poor devil of a Frenchman, seeking service, I believe. I found him and another in that cursed cutter, when I was fool enough to go aboard. The other has been dead sick all the way; but I know nothing of them, for we were taken almost immediately after I got into her;" and he proceeded to explain that he had been returning to England in the *Good Hope*, but judging from what he heard that the time was not yet quite propitious for his reappearance, he had sought to make his way back to France or Holland in the vessel in which he was taken.

"Well, well," said Hotham; "I will lodge you as well as I can, and get you out of the scrape as soon as I can; but keep out of my son's way, for he is a vast rogue, and very ill affected to the king. Now, I'll see what this fellow has to say for himself. Come hither, sir!"

By a rapid and dexterous change of look, Barecolt contrived to make it appear that he did not at first understand the governor's words, but comprehended the sign to approach by which they were followed, and, advancing with a low bow, laid his hand upon his heart, and then stood upright before Hotham, in what he considered a graceful attitude.

"A tall fellow," said Hotham, turning to Colonel Ashburnham. "Pray, who may you be, sir?"

"I be von Capitaine Jersval," replied Barecolt, with a low bow; "von French gentleman who seek to distinguish herself by serving anybody."

"A laudable and elastic ambition," said Ashburnham, turning away.

"By serving anybody?" said Hotham. "Pray, Captain Jersval, whom would you like to serve best?"

"It be to me von matter of de grandest indifference," replied Barecolt, "so dat de pay and de glory be de same on both sides."

"That's as it may be," answered Hotham; "but the truth is, I want some good, serviceable officers to help in strengthening the fortifications."

"I am de man dat can do it," was Barecolt's reply. "I have strengthen many fortification in my time, amongst de rest Rochelle. But I must know, monsieur, if dat de pay and de glory be equal; for I came here to offer service to de king, and not finding her majesty where I tought, and my money going very fast in dis sacré dear land of England, where de vine and de meat is sold at de weight of gold, and vat you call d—n tough, too, I tink to go back again, when your black sheep catch me, and bring me here, pardieu!"

Ashburnham could not stand it any longer, but turned to a window and laughed outright. Hotham, however, continued gravely to interrogate Captain Barecolt in regard to the plans and purposes which brought him to England; and, having satisfied himself completely that he was one of those adventurous soldiers of whom great numbers were at that time wandering about Europe, taking service wherever they could find it, he determined to put his skill to the test before he tried his honesty. Sending for pen, ink, and paper, together with compasses and a ruler, he directed Captain Barecolt to draw him out a plan of any little fortification he thought fit; but Barecolt, who, to tell the truth, had not altogether misused his advantages, and might have become almost as great a man as he fancied himself, if it had not been for his swaggering, drinking, drabbing, and lying propensities, instantly exclaimed,—

"Ah! ça vous verrez,—you must see in von

meenute;" and, taking the compasses dexterously in hand, he portioned off curtains, and bastions, and half-moons, and horn-works, and redoubts, and glacis, and ditches, and salient angles, and every sort of defence that could be applied to the protection of a town, with a rapidity that somewhat astounded the slow comprehension of Hotham, who soon became convinced that he had got one of the first engineers in Europe within the walls of Hull. His exclamation of surprise called Ashburnham to the table, who, looking over his shoulder, and very willing to do Barecolt a good turn, exclaimed,—

"Upon my soul, the Frenchman seems to understand what he's about!"

"Monsieur, you do flatter me," replied Barecolt, with another low bow. "I be von poor insignificant man, who have certainly been employed in de great enterprise, and have pick up some leetle vat you call spattering of de science, but I cannot be compared to many man."

Hotham, however, was completely taken in; and although he puzzled his head in vain to recall the name of Captain Jersval amongst the great men of Europe, yet he thought that at least it was worth his while to engage him in strengthening the defences of Hull, and withholding him from the service of the king, till such time as the Parliament should determine whether they would take him regularly into their employment or not.

I must not be understood, however, to imply that Hotham was in any degree sincerely attached to the Parliamentary party, or wished, or even expected, that it would be ultimately successful against the king. But in all troublous times there is a multitude of waverers—some from weakness, some from ambition—hanging on the outskirts of a party, lending it inefficient help, and generally falling in the end, as he did, by their own indecision. Those who are moved by ambition, like Hotham, ordinarily hope to wring from the party to which they wish success that advancement which they could not otherwise obtain, by giving some countenance to the enemy, and not unfrequently meet with the just reward of such conduct by being neglected or punished, when those whom they have aided against their conscience, for their own purposes, have obtained a preponderance by the support of themselves and others like them. Hotham, however, wishing to make himself of importance, and sell his services dear to the king, was very much inclined to gather round him men that might make him formidable; and consequently, after some little deliberation, he turned to Barecolt, saying,—

"Well, Captain Jersval, I think I can get you good service, if you like; but before I can say anything positive I must apply to the higher powers. In the meantime, however, if you like it, I will employ you upon the fortifications here, at fifteen shillings a day."

"And my victual?" said Barecolt.

"Well," replied Hotham, "I can't exactly give you a place at my own table, but you shall have a billet upon any victualler in the town you like, and an order for your supply, chargeable upon the Government."

Barecolt again bowed low, saying,—

"Monsieur, I am your most devoted. You vill inspect de vork every day, and vat you say shall not bind you, unless you like vat be done. I am quite sure of de great success. Den, if de higher power say, ve vill not have Captain Jersval, goot; you can pull off your hat and say, Mon capitaine, goot-morning; and I shall be free to go vere I like. Dat is but all fair, I tink."

"Quite—quite," answered Hotham; "and so we will leave it, captain. I will go into the ante-room for a moment, to direct the order to be made out, and to-morrow morning, if you will be with me by six, we will walk round the ramparts."

"Sir, you treat me very polished," answered Barecolt, with another profound bow; and Hotham retired for an instant into the next room.

Ashburnham immediately advanced a step towards Barecolt, fixing his eyes keenly upon him.

"And pray, sir," he demanded, "do you really intend to go over to the Parliament, after having, as I understand, served his majesty?"

"I have taken the king's money, colonel," answered Barecolt; "but every one has a right to get out of a scrape as he can."

"I think I understand you," answered Ashburnham; "and if so, God speed you: if not, one day you will repent it."

"There are laws amongst soldiers, colonel," answered Barecolt, "which are never violated by men of honour; but there is no law against cozening a captor. It be quite true," he continued, at once resuming his jargon on the reappearance of Hotham at the door, "I know noting about de parties here; it make no difference to me vich be right and vich be wrong: all I know is, dat party pay me be right, and very right too, as dey vill find ven dey see vat I vill do."

The conference did not last much longer: Hotham gave the billet and the order to Barecolt, and then placed him in the hands of a captain of the train-bands, to guide him about the town, as he said, and to see that he had everything he needed, but as much to keep a certain degree of watchfulness over his proceedings as anything else; and, this being done, he let him go. Colonel Ashburnham was placed under stricter guard, but yet treated courteously and well; and orders were given to let the governor know as soon as the other Frenchman should be sufficiently recovered to be brought before him.

CHAPTER XVII.

Captain Barecolt and his guide now issued forth into the streets of Hull, and sauntered on for a few steps without speaking. An English town, in those days, especially after the sun was set, presented a very different aspect from that which it offers to the night wanderer at present. All was darkness and gloom, except where, from an open door or unshuttered window, the lights which the people within were using for their own advantage served also for the benefit of the passenger; and indeed every one who had occasion to traverse the streets generally furnished himself with a lantern or link, to prevent him from running his head against a post, or breaking his neck down some of the steep flights of steps by which the even course of progression was not unfrequently interrupted.

"Now, master captain," said Barecolt's companion, "what inn do you want to go to? for it won't be pleasant roaming about Hull after dark."

"Dat is de ting vich I don't know," answered Barecolt; "I never have be in Hull before."

"Then one inn is as good as another to you, Captain Chairsfall?" replied the officer of the train-bands.

"No, no, no!" replied Barecolt; "dat be not just, monsieur: all inn be not de same—it depend on vat be in dem. I must have de good vine, de good bed, de good meat."

"Well, you can have all those at the 'Lion,' or at the 'Rose' either," replied his companion.

"Ah, no! I like to see," answered Barecolt; "ve vill just valk trough de town, take a leetle peep at dis inn, and a leetle peep at dat, and perhaps I take a glass of vine here, and a glass of vine dere, and give you anoder, mon ami, just to try vich be de best. You see my nose, have you not? Vell, it know vat good vine be."

"It looks it," answered the other; for that nose was one which few men could let alone, such were its attractions. "However, if we are to have this long walk, I must get a lantern at my house," and on he went down the street before him, till, turning to the left, he entered another, in which not only was his own house situated, but also the identical inn called the "Swan." The door was open, a light was shining within, the swan in all its glory was swinging from a pole over the door, and Barecolt insinuated a desire to begin their perquisitions there.

The captain of the train-bands, there is every reason to suspect, had a friend at the "Lion," and another at the "Rose," for he certainly did not do justice to Mrs. White in the account he gave of the accommodations of her house. But Barecolt, who thought that, good or bad, he never could have a gill of wine too much, and who had not tasted anything stronger than water for a greater length of time than was at all convenient to his stomach, was resolute to try what the "Swan" could produce, and consequently led the way up the steps and into the house, notwithstanding the remonstrances of the worthy predecessor of John Gilpin.

Advancing with an easy and self-satisfied air to the little room which we have spoken of, the window of which commanded the passage and the staircase, he found the worthy landlady herself, seated with a tall, powerful man, considerably above the middle age, but still hale and hearty, with white hair, indeed, but thick eyebrows, still jet black, and long dark eyelashes shading an eye of that peculiar blue which is seldom found without a rich stream of the Milesian blood flowing in the veins of the owner. A jug of ale and some cold ham were between the two, and Mrs. White seemed to be doing the honours of her house to the stranger with great courtesy and attention.

"Vould you have bounty, madame," said Barecolt, "just to let me have von leetle gill, as you call it, of de very best vine, and anoder of de same for my friend here?"

"Certainly, sir," said Mrs. White. "Ah, Captain Jenkins! is that you? Well, I am very glad to see you in the house at last. A dull night, sir. Nancy, Nancy! give these gentlemen two gills of the best wine. White or red, sir?"

"Oh, vite, vite!" replied Captain Barecolt; "de red vine in England be vort noting."

"White, Nancy, white!" cried the landlady. "Won't you come in and take a seat, Mr. Jenkins? Here's Mr. O'Donnell with me, whom you know, I think."

Captain Jenkins, however, of the train-bands of the city of Hull, grumbled something about not being able to stay long; but the more gallant Barecolt, instantly accepting the lady's invitation, walked in, and the other followed.

The two measures of wine were speedily set before them; and Barecolt, tossing off his in a moment, seemed to like it so well that he called for another. But Captain Jenkins shrugged his shoulders, and whispered that there was very much better at the "Lion;" "very much better indeed."

What effect this insinuation would have had upon the determination of Barecolt I cannot take upon myself to say; but an event occurred at that moment which at once decided his conduct.

Just as Nancy was placing the second gill before him, a loud noise of people speaking and apparently scuffling in the street was heard. It gradually grew louder, and at length seemed to reach the steps leading up to the house.

There was something in the tone of one of the voices which, though raised into accents such as Barecolt had never heard it use, seemed familiar to his ear, and he instantly started up to look out.

"It's nothing but some drunken men, sir," said Mrs. White; "if they don't mind, the watch will get hold of them."

But the watch had already done its function;

and the moment after the voice of Mr. Dry of Longsoaken was distinctly heard exclaiming, "Get hence, ye men of Belial! ye false witnesses, raised up by Jezebel, whose blood the dogs licked, to testify falsely of the just Naboth! Drunk! It is you are drunk! I never was so sober in my life. Get hence, I say!" he continued, with a loud hiccup; "I lodge here, I tell you;" and, shaking off the grasp of two of the watch who had him in custody, he rushed into the "Swan," and had nearly reached the foot of the stairs when he fell prone upon the well-washed floor, and lay there, unable to raise himself.

Mrs. White instantly rushed out, followed close by Nancy, to the rescue of her guest; for the watch had by this time entered, and were about to lay hands once more upon the person of Mr. Ezekiel Dry. The good landlady, however, easily satisfied them that Mr. Dry would be taken care of, and not suffered further to disturb the peace of the town; and, as he was by no means in a comfortable or convenient position on the floor, which, from the undulatory motion he perceived in it, he asserted loudly was affected by an earthquake, the two men who had followed him were employed to raise him, and conveyed him struggling violently to his bed.

By no means unaccustomed to the treatment of such maladies, Mrs. White remained for a few minutes with her reverend and respectable guest, and then, leaving him, as we shall do for the present, returned to her little parlour.

"Madame," said Barecolt, as soon as she entered, "your vine be so very good dat I shall remain here vile I stay in de town. Here is von leetle billet from de gouverneur, and as I know dat it is not pleasant to lodge de soldier, or de officer eider, here be von order for my provision and maintenance, vich vill be paid at de good rate, and, as I like de good vine, it may be someting in your vay."

Mrs. White could only curtsey and submit; but Captain Jenkins, who had hoped to put a good thing in the paws of the "Lion," or in the bosom of the "Rose," flung out of the house in a fit of disgust, saying he would come for Captain Chairsfall early the next morning. Before he went, however, he called Mrs. White aside, and whispered to her to keep a sharp eye upon her new guest.

"If you find him inquiring his way out of the town, or going out late at night or early in the morning," he said, with an important air, "you must send word either to me or the governor, it's all the same which; for he is a Frenchman who has come over to serve the king, in rebellion to the Parliament, and has been taken prisoner. He pretends now to be willing to go with us; but I have doubts, many doubts, Mrs. White; so look to him, look to him well, if you would merit favour."

Mrs. White promised to look to him, but inwardly proposed to have a due regard for her own pocket, by obtaining speedy payment for everything she supplied; and as for the rest, "to let the man take his chance," as she termed it.

I cannot, however, aver that Mrs. White was either prepossessed by the appearance of the worthy Captain Barecolt or by the account given of him by Captain Jenkins; though, to say truth, she did not put much faith in the assurance of the officer of the trained bands.

That her new lodger had come to serve the king, however, and then showed a good will to serve his enemies, seemed clear; so that when she returned to her parlour, after her conference with Jenkins, though she was perfectly civil to the apparent Frenchman, as indeed she was to every one, hers was that quick and sharp-set civility which can be better felt than described. She answered all his questions in as few words as possible, interspersing them with numerous curtsies and very civil epithets; but it was very evident to Captain Barecolt that Mrs. White wished for as little of his company as possible.

He was not a man, as may be imagined, who would attribute this distaste to his society to any want of personal attractions; and he settled it in his own mind that it must be his assumed quality of Frenchman that prejudiced the landlady against him, and that evil he determined to remedy as soon as he was sure of his ground; for Captain Barecolt, at that moment, had as strong a desire for the private company of Mrs. White as she had for his absence.

Mr. Hugh O'Donnell still kept his seat at the table too; and he looked at Mrs. White, and Mrs. White at Mr. O'Donnell, with very significant glances, and no less significant silence, till at length Captain Barecolt's impudence fairly gave way, and, saying to himself, "Hang the fellow! I must wait till he chooses to go," he rose, inquiring, "Can anybody show me de room dat I am to sleep in? for I like very great to see de bed vere I lie."

"Oh yes, sir!" said Mrs. White; "you shall have as good a bed as any in Hull. Here, Nancy, Nancy!" and, preceded by the girl, the worthy captain was led upstairs, and shown into a bedroom just opposite to that of Arrah Neil.

CHAPTER XVIII.

At the door of Captain Barecolt's room Nancy put the candle in his hand, and made him a low curtsey, which might be partly in answer to various civil speeches which the worthy and respectable gentleman had addressed to her as they went up-stairs, partly as a hint that she did not intend to go any farther in his company; for, to say the truth, the nose of the tall captain was not at all prepossessing in Nancy's eyes.

"I want to speak de leetle vord vid you, my dear," said Captain Barecolt, taking the candle.

The girl, however, only dropped him another curtsey, replying, "Well, sir, what is it? Pray be quick, for missis will want me."

"Tell me, my dear," said Barecolt, lowering his voice, "vat be dat gentleman dat I see come in just now?—he who vere vat you call teepsy?"

"Oh, he is a lodger, sir," replied Nancy, turning round to go away.

"Stop, stop!" said Barecolt; "answer me de oder leetle vord. Have he got von young lady vid him?"

"Yes, sir; no more," replied Nancy.

"And in dis house?" asked Captain Barecolt.

"Yes, sir," rejoined the girl again; "just in there; he locks the door upon her, the old vermin!" she added, not at all approving such an abridgment of female liberty, and looking upon Mr. Dry as little better than a Turk in the garb of a Calvinist.

"Ah, he be de monstrous big rogue!" replied Barecolt. "I tought I see him before; I know him, Nancee; I know him vell for one extravagant great tief."

"He is not very extravagant here," answered the maid; "but I must go, sir, upon my word;" and, whisking round, she descended the stairs, at the foot of which her mistress called her into the little parlour, and inquired what that man had been saying to her.

"Oh, he was asking about the gentleman in the chamber, ma'am," was Nancy's reply; "and he says that he is an extravagant thief, that he has seen him before, and knows him."

Mrs. White looked at Mr. O'Donnell, and Mr. O'Donnell at Mrs. White, and then the landlady murmured, "He is not far wrong, I fancy;" to which Mr. O'Donnell assented by a nod.

In the meanwhile Captain Barecolt entered his bedchamber, set down the candle, and stretched his long limbs upon a chair, after which he fell into a fit of thought, not gloomy, but profound. He was a man who loved adventures, as the reader is aware, and he saw a wonderful provision of them before him, in which he hoped and expected to have an opportunity of developing many of those vast and important qualities which he attributed to himself.

Wit, courage, cunning, presence of mind, dexterity of action, together with his wonderful powers of strategy, were all likely to have full means of displaying themselves in the twofold enterprise of delivering Arrah Neil from the hands of Mr. Dry of Longsoaken and Lord Beverley from the clutches of Sir John Hotham. He was well contented with what he had done already. To have cheated a governor of Hull, to have obtained his liberty in five minutes, to have passed for a Frenchman, to have cast off the companionship of the embarrassing Mr. Jenkins, were feats of no light merit in his eyes; and he now proposed to go on, step by step, till he had reached the climax of accomplishment; first using art, then daring, and crowning the whole by some brilliant display of courage, which would immortalize him in the eyes of the royalist party.

After he had thus continued to think for about a quarter of an hour, and had arrived at the point of doubting whether he was in fact Julius Cæsar or Alexander the Great, with some slight suspicion that he might be neither, but Henry IV. of France instead, he opened the door quietly, and, without taking the candle, advanced to the head of the stairs, where, bending down his head, he listened for a moment. There was a dull, heavy sound of people talking, however; and a man's voice was heard, though the words he used could not be made out.

"Ay, that d—d fellow is there still!" murmured Captain Barecolt; "if he does not go soon, I'll walk down and cut his throat." But, just as he was turning to go back to his own room, he heard the door of the little parlour—which, as it closed with a pulley and weight, announced its movements by a prodigious rattle—give indications of its being opened, and the voice of Mr. O'Donnell could be distinguished, as he marched out, saying,—

"The first thing to be done, however, Mrs. White, is to get her out of this man's hands."

Captain Barecolt waited till the Irishman's footsteps sounded no longer in the hall, and then, walking down-stairs, proceeded straight into the little parlour, and, much to the astonishment of Mrs. White, seated himself before her, saying in good plain English,—

"I think so too, Mrs. White."

"Lord, sir! what do you mean?" asked the worthy landlady.

"I mean, 'the first thing is, to get her out of this man's hands,' Mrs. White. So now let me have some supper, and I will tell you all about it."

"Dear me, sir! Why, this is very funny," replied the landlady, with an agitated smoothing of the tablecloth and a tremulous arranging of the jugs and plates; "I didn't know that any one heard what the gentleman said."

"But I did, though, Mrs. White," replied Barecolt; "loud words will always catch long ears."

"Why, Lord, sir, you speak as good English as I do!" said Mrs. White.

"To be sure I do," answered Barecolt; "I should be a fool if I didn't. But now, my good lady, tell me if I can trust you; for, although my own life is a thing that I care nothing about, and is risked every day wherever it can be risked, by shot and steel, in the breach and in the field, there is much more to be perilled by anything like rashness than such a trifle as that. There's this young lady's safety and liberty, and I can tell you that there are a great many very high people who would give no light reward to those who would set her free from this base caitiff who has got her."

"Dear me!" cried Mrs. White; "I wish I had known that before, for here have we been talking of nothing else for the last hour, Mr. O'Donnell and I. Do you know who she is, sir?"

"I know more than I choose to say, Mrs. White," replied Barecolt, who had made it the first principle of his life, from soft childhood to rubicund maturity, never to confess ignorance of anything, and who had frequently made a significant nod or a wise look pass for a whole volume of information; "but what I ask you is, can I trust you, Mrs. White? can I trust to your zeal, fidelity, and discretion? as the Duke of Montmorenci asked me, when he was about to take arms for the deliverance of France from the tyranny of Richelieu. I made him a low bow, Mrs. White, laid my hand upon my heart, and said, 'Perfectly, monseigneur;' and if he had taken my advice, he would now have had a head upon his shoulders."

"Lord have mercy!" exclaimed Mrs. White, overpowered with the grand and tragic ideas which her strange guest presented to her imagination. "Oh dear me, yes, sir! you can trust me perfectly, I assure you. I would risk my house and everything rather than not set the poor dear girl free from that nasty old puritanical creature. Why, this was the very first house she came to after she came over from Ireland, though Mr. O'Donnell says they went to Holland first to escape suspicion. Ay, and here her poor mother died."

"Indeed!" said Captain Barecolt, drinking in all the tidings that he heard; "I did not know that this was the house, Mrs. White. However, I am glad to hear it. A very good house it is, and capital wine. You must know, then, Mrs. White, since I can trust you fully, that I came into Hull for the express purpose of setting this young lady free, and restoring her to her friends, Lord Walton and his sister."

The worthy captain, as the reader will perceive, was never at a loss for a lie, and indeed the habit of telling the exact truth had been so long abandoned, if ever it was possessed, that the worthy professor of the sword might have found no slight difficulty in avoiding every shade of falsehood which his fertile imagination was continually offering him to embellish his various narratives withal. He had no particular object in deceiving Mrs. White in regard to the real mode, manner, and object of his visit to Hull; but it was his general practice to begin by telling the lie first, and leaving the truth as a sort of strong corps of reserve to fall back upon in case of need.

"Dear me, sir!" cried Mrs. White; "why, Mr. Jenkins told me that you were a Frenchman who had come over to serve our poor good king against these Parliamentary folks; that you had been taken prisoner, and now offer to serve the Parliament."

"All a lie, all a lie, Mrs. White," replied Captain Barecolt; "it is wonderful what lies people will tell when it is quite as easy to speak the truth. However, in saying I was a Frenchman, he knew no better, poor silly man, for I pretended to be so in order to carry on my schemes the better. But, as I see you are true to the royal cause, I will let you know I am an officer in the king's service, and have no intention whatever of being anything else. Neither must you suppose, Mrs. White, that I come here as a spy; for, although I hold that upon certain occasions the office of spy may become honourable, yet it is not one that I would willingly fill. So now, Mrs. White, as I said before, let me have some supper, and then tell me what is to be done for the deliverance of this young lady."

Captain Barecolt had risen wonderfully in the estimation of Mrs. White during the last five minutes; and such is the effect of our mental affections upon our corporeal faculties, that she began to think him by no means so ugly a man as he had at first appeared: his nose reduced itself into very tolerable and seemly proportions in her eyes, the redness thereof became nothing more than a pleasant glow, and his tall figure and somewhat long, ungainly limbs acquired an air of dignity and command which Mrs. White thought very striking.

Bustling about, then, she prepared to supply him with the comfortable things of this life with great good-will, and was struck with considerable admiration at the vigour and pertinacity with which he assailed the viands placed before him. She was obliged, indeed, to call to Nancy to bring a fresh supply; but Captain Barecolt made a significant sign by laying his finger on the side of his nose, which organ might be considered indeed as a sort of telegraph erected by nature with a view to such signals; and he afterwards reminded her in a low voice that his incognito must be kept up with all others but herself.

"You are the only confidante I shall make in the town of Hull," he added: "one confederate is quite sufficient for a man of genius, and to everybody else I am de same Capitaine Jersval dat came over from France to help de king, but be now villing to help de Parliament."

"Lawk, sir, how well you do it!" said the landlady; "but I think you are very right not to tell any one but me; for they are a sad, prying, gossiping race in the town of Hull, and you might soon have your secret blown over the place. But as to poor Miss Arrah, sir, I really do not know what is to be done. I can see very well that Mr. O'Donnell knows more about her than he chooses to say; and I can find that it was through him that the poor lady, her mother, held her communications with Ireland. He won't tell me who she is, though, nor what was her father's name, nor her mother's either, though I tried to pump him as hard as I could. Perhaps you, sir, may be able to tell me."

"There is such a thing as discretion, Mrs. White," said Captain Barecolt, with a sagacious air; but, suspecting that Mrs. White had some doubts regarding him and his knowledge of Arrah, and was only trying to ascertain how far his information respecting her really extended, he added, "I suppose the young lady is in bed by this time; but I should be glad, Mrs. White, if you would take the first oppor-

tunity of telling her that one of the gentlemen who accompanied Lord Walton from Bishop's Merton is now in Hull, and will not quit the place without setting her free."

"Oh, bless you, sir! I daresay she is not in bed," answered Mrs. White; "and if she be, I should not mind waking her to tell her such good news as that. I'll go directly," she continued, shaking her bunch of keys significantly. "The old hunks locks the door and takes away the key, and then gets as drunk as a beast, so that she might starve for that matter; but I can always get in notwithstanding."

"Ay, ay!" answered Barecolt; "a landlady is nothing without her pass-key, so run and make use of it, there's a dear woman; and if the young lady is up, I will go and see her now. If she is not, it must be to-morrow morning."

Mrs. White was absent for about five minutes, during which time Captain Barecolt continued his attack upon the cold beef, so that, by the time the worthy landlady returned, the vast sirloin looked as if a mammoth had been feeding on it.

"Oh, dear sir," said Mrs. White, "she is so glad to hear that you are here! and she would fain get up and go away with you this very night; but I told her that couldn't be, for the gates are closed and locked."

"Locks are nothing to me, Mrs. White," replied the captain, with a sublime look; "and gates disappear before my hand as if they were made of pasteboard. Did I not with a single petard blow open the Porte Nantoise of Ancenis, which weighed three tons weight, and took two men to move it on its hinges?"

"Lord ha' mercy, sir!" exclaimed Mrs. White; "why, you are as bad as Samson."

"A great deal worse," replied the captain; "but, however, I could not go to-night, for there's other business to be done first."

"Oh ay, yes, sir," she said: "to get the papers; for I do not know whether you are aware that the old puritanical wretch has got all the papers and things out of poor Sergeant Neil's cottage—at least we think so; and I don't doubt in the least that all about poor Miss Arrah is to be found there."

"Nor I either, Mrs. White," answered Barecolt; "but can I see the young lady to-night, or must I wait till to-morrow?"

"She will be up in a few minutes, sir," replied the worthy landlady. "She would not hear of waiting, though I told her I could easily get the old man out of the way to-morrow by sending him a wild-goose chase after Hugh O'Donnell."

"Well, then," said Barecolt, "you go and see when she is ready, and in the meantime I'll finish my supper."

CHAPTER XIX.

"COME, sir, you must get up!" said an officer of the garrison, standing beside the Earl of Beverley, to whom we must now return, as he lay on the floor of the little cabin, affecting to be still suffering from sickness: "you must get up and come with me, for we've got a lodging prepared for you hard by here."

The earl pretended scarcely to understand him, and made some answer in broken English, which, though it was not quite so well assumed as the jargon of Captain Barecolt, was sufficiently like the language of a foreigner to keep up the character he had taken upon himself.

"Come, come; you must get up!" reiterated the officer, taking him by the arm; and slowly, and apparently feebly, the earl arose and suffered the other to lead him upon deck.

It was by this time dark, but several persons with lanterns in their hands were waiting at the top of the hatchway; and, guarded and lighted by them, the earl was led from the vessel into the town, and thence to a small building near the city wall, pierced for musketry, and having a little platform at the top, on which was mounted a single cannon. On the side next to the town appeared a door and three windows, and before the blockhouse, as it was termed, a sentinel was already marching up and down in expectation of the arrival of the prisoner; but it was with some difficulty that the door was opened to give entrance to the party which now approached.

The aspect of the place to which the earl was to be consigned was certainly not very inviting, especially seen by the light of lanterns in a dark night; and the inner room to which the guard led him afforded but little means of rendering himself comfortable within those damp and narrow walls. A bed was there, a table, and a chair, but nothing else; and Lord Beverley, still maintaining his character, made various exclamations in French upon the treatment to which the people of Hull thought fit to subject an officer and a gentleman.

"You shall have some meat and beer presently," replied the officer, who understood a few words only of the language the prisoner spoke; "but as to a fire, mounseer, that you can't have, because there is no fireplace, you see."

The earl shrugged his shoulders with a look of discontent, but prepared to make the best of his situation; and as soon as the meat and beer which they had promised was brought, the key turned in the lock, and he was left alone, he sat down by the light of the lantern which they had provided him, to meditate over his present condition and his future plans, with the peculiar turn of mind which we have attempted to depict in the preceding pages.

"This is not a pleasant consummation," he said to himself, "either as regards the king's service or my safety. However, out of the cloud comes lightning—from the depths of night bursts forth the sun; all bright things are preceded by darkness; and the shadow that is upon me may give place to light. Even here, perhaps, I may be enabled to do more for the cause I have undertaken than if I had reached France. It must be tried, at all events. There

is nothing like boldness, though one cannot well be bold within these walls;" and he glanced his eyes over the narrow space in which he was confined, thinking, with a somewhat sad smile, that there was but little room for the exercise of any of those energies which may be called the life of life.

"It is a sad thing imprisonment," he thought. "Here the active being lies dead, and it is but the clay that lives. Vain every great design, fruitless every intention and every effort, idle all speculation, empty every aspiration here! Cut off from all objects on which to exercise the powers of mind or body, the patriot and the traitor, the philosopher and the fool, are equal. No," he continued, after a moment's pause—"no, not so! Truth and honour are happiness even in a dungeon, and the grasp of intellect and imagination can reach beyond these walls, and bring within the narrow limits of the prison materials to build mighty fabrics, that the power of tyrants or enemies cannot overthrow. Did not Galileo leave upon the stones that surrounded him bright traces of the immortal spirit? Did he not in the cold cell wander by the powers of mind through all the glorious works of the Almighty, and triumph, even in chains, over the impotent malice of mankind? So may I too; but my first consideration must be of things more immediate. How shall I deal with this man Hotham? I do not think he would know me, disguised as I am now; shall I attempt still to pass for a Frenchman? If I do, perhaps I doom myself to long imprisonment. I wonder where my companion can be, and Ashburnham. 'Tis strange they are not placed in the same prison as myself. Pray heaven they have fared better! for, though men say, 'the more the merrier,' yet I could not much wish any one to share such a lodging as this. I hope and trust that fellow Barecolt will put a guard upon his tongue. Well said the Hebrew king that it was an unruly member, and never did I know head in which it was less easily governed. He would not betray me, I do believe; but yet in his babble he may do more mischief than a less faithful man. Well, things must take their course—I cannot rule them; and I may as well supply the body's wants, since they have afforded me the means."

Thus thinking, he drew his chair to the table, and took some of the provisions which had been brought him, after which he again fell into a deep fit of thought, and then starting up, exclaimed aloud, "There is no use in calculating in such circumstances as these. None can tell what the next minute will bring forth, and the only plan is to be prepared to take advantage of whatever may happen; for circumstances must be hard indeed that will not permit a wise and quick-witted man to abate their evil or to augment their good. So I will even go sleep as soon as I can; but methinks the moon is rising;" and, approaching the window, which was strongly barred, he looked out for a few minutes, as the orb of night rose red and large through the dull and heavy air of Hull.

"Where is sweet Annie Walton now?" he thought; "and whither is her dear bright mind wandering? Perhaps she is even now looking at the planet, and thinking of him whom she believes far away. Yes, surely she will think of me. God's blessing on her sweet heart! and may she soon know brighter days again, for these are sad ones. However, it is some consolation to know that she is not aware of this misadventure. Well, I will go and try to sleep."

He then, after offering his prayers to God,—for he was not one to forget such homage,—cast himself down upon his bed without taking off his clothes, and in a few minutes was sound asleep. During the two preceding days he had undergone much fatigue, and had not closed an eye for eight-and-forty hours, so that at first his slumber was as profound as that of a peasant; but towards morning Imagination reasserted her power, and took possession of his senses even in sleep.

He fancied that he was in Italy again, and that Charles Walton, looking as he had done in early youth, was walking beside him along a terrace, where cypresses and urns of sculptured stone flanked the broad gravel-walk, which overhung a steep precipice. What possessed him he knew not, but it seemed as if some demon kept whispering in his ear to dare his loved companion to leap down, and, though reluctant, he did so, knowing all the while that if his friend attempted it he would infallibly perish. "Charles," he said in the wild perversity of his dreaming brain, "dare you stand with me on the top of that low wall, and jump down into the dell below?"

"Whatever you do I will do, Francis," the young nobleman seemed to reply; and, without waiting for further discussion, they both approached the edge, mounted the low wall, and then leaped off together. The earl's brain seemed to turn as he fell, and everything reeled before his dizzy sight, till at length he suddenly found himself upon his feet at the bottom, unhurt, and, instead of his friend, Annie Walton standing beside him, in deep mourning, inquiring, "How could you be so rash, Francis?"

Before he could reply he awoke; and, gazing wildly round him, saw the sunshine of the early morning streaming through the window, and cheering even the gloomy aspect of the prison.

"This is a strange dream," he thought, seating himself upon the edge of the bed, and leaning his head upon his hand—"a mighty strange dream indeed! Have I really tempted Charles Walton to take such a dangerous leap, in persuading him to draw the sword for his king? No, no! He could not avoid it—he was already prepared; and, besides, the voice of duty spoke by my lips. Whatever be the result to him or to me, I cannot blame myself for doing that which was right. Weak men

judge even their own actions by the results, when in fact they should forget all but the motives, and, when satisfied that they are just and sufficient, should leave all the rest in the hands of God. I will think of this no more. It is but folly;" and rising he advanced to the window, before which he heard the sound of people's voices speaking.

The surprise of Lord Beverley was not small at beholding straight before him the long person and never-to-be-mistaken nose of Captain Deciduous Barecolt, standing side by side with Sir John Hotham, governor of Hull, and apparently upon terms of gracious intimacy with that officer.

Barecolt was at that moment drawing with the point of a cane upon the ground a number of lines and angles which seemed to the eyes of Lord Beverley very much like the plan of a fortification, while three stout soldiers, apparently in attendance upon the governor, stood at a little distance, and looked on in grave and respectful silence. Every now and then the worthy captain seized Sir John by the breast of his coat with all the exaggerated gesticulation of a Frenchman, pointed to the lines he had drawn, held out his stick towards other parts of Hull, shrugged, grinned, and chattered, and then flew back to his demonstration again with the utmost appearance of zeal and goodwill.

"What in the name of fortune can the fellow be about?" murmured the earl. "He is surely not going to fortify Hull against the king! Well, I suppose if he do it will be taken. That is one comfort. But, on my word, he seems to have made great progress in Hotham's good graces. I trust it is not at my expense. No, no! He is not one of that sort of men. Folly and vice enough, but not dishonour.

"I have no small mind to try my eloquence on Hotham too," continued the earl, after watching them for a moment longer; "I do not think he is so far committed with the Parliament as to be beyond recall to a sense of duty. He used to be a vain as well as an ambitious man; and perhaps, if one could but hold out to his vanity and ambition the prospect of great honour and advancement, as the reward for taking the first step towards healing the breaches in his country's peace by making submission to the king, he might be gained. It is worth the trial, and if it cost me my head it shall be made."

As he thus pondered, the governor and Captain Barecolt walked slowly on, followed by the three soldiers; and the sentinel before the door of the blockhouse recommenced his perambulations.

"Holloa, monsieur!" cried Lord Beverley from the window; and on the approach of the soldier he explained to him, in a mixed jargon of French and English, that he much wished to have an interview with the governor, adding that, if it were granted, he might communicate something to Sir John Hotham which he would find of great importance.

"Why, there he stands," cried the soldier, "talking with the other Frenchman;" and he pointed with his hand to a spot which the earl could not see, but where the governor had again paused to listen to Captain Barecolt's plans and devices.

"*Allez, allez!* tell him," cried Lord Beverley; and the man immediately hastened to give the message.

In about three minutes he returned, saying, "He will send for you in an hour or two, monsieur; and in the meantime here comes your breakfast piping hot."

CHAPTER XX.

More than an hour went by without Lord Beverley hearing anything further from the governor; and he was sitting at the table, meditating over his scheme, when his ear caught the sound of voices without.

"Ah! here comes the messenger," he thought, "to summon me to Hotham's presence;" but the moment after he distinguished the tones of his worthy companion, Barecolt, who exclaimed, apparently addressing the sentinel, "But I must see the blockhouse, I tell you, sair; it be part of my dutee to see de blockhouse, and here be de wordy Capitaine Jenkin, one man of de big respectability, who tell you de same ting."

Captain Jenkins grumbled a word or two in confirmation of Barecolt's assertion; but the sentinel adhered stedfastly to his point, and said that the mounseer might do what he pleased with the outside of the place, but should not set his foot within the doors without a special order from the governor, under his own hand.

Of this permission, limited as it was, Barecolt hastened to take advantage; and, having previously ascertained that his companion, Jenkins, did not understand one word of the French language, he approached the window at which he had caught sight of the face of Lord Beverley in the morning, and which was still open, declaring that he must look into the inside at all events.

The moment he was near, however, he said to the prisoner rapidly, but in a low tone, "What can be done to get you out?"

He spoke in French, and the earl answered in the same tongue, "Nothing that I know; but be ready to help me at a moment's notice. Where are you to be found?"

"At the 'Swan' inn," replied Barecolt; "but I will be with you in the course of this night—I have a plan in my head;" and, seeing that Captain Jenkins, who had been speaking a word or two to the sentinel, was now approaching, he walked on, and busied himself with closely examining the rest of the building.

Not long after he was gone, the earl was summoned before the governor; and with one of the train-bands on each side—for at this

time Hull could boast of no other garrison—he was led from the blockhouse to Sir John Hotham's residence. After being conducted up a wide flight of stairs, he was shown into the same large room in which the examination of Barecolt had taken place. On the present occasion, however, to the surprise and somewhat to the dismay of the earl, he found the room half-filled with people, many of whom he knew; and, for an instant forgetting how completely he was disguised, he thought that all his scheme must now fall to the ground, and his immediate discovery take place.

The cold and strange looks, however, that were turned upon him, both by Hotham himself and several of the officers with whose persons the earl was acquainted, soon restored his confidence, and showed him that his person was far better concealed than he had imagined. Never losing his presence of mind for a single instant, he advanced at once to Sir John Hotham, and made him a low bow, asking if he were the governor.

The answer, of course, was in the affirmative, and Hotham proceeded to question him in French, which he spoke with tolerable fluency. With never-failing readiness the earl answered all his questions, giving a most probable account of himself, and stating that he had come over from France with recommendations for the king, in the hope of getting some important command, as it was expected every day at the French court that Charles would be obliged to have recourse to arms against his Parliament.

Several of the gentlemen present, who had either been really at the court of France very lately, or pretended to have been so, stepped forward to ask a good number of questions of the prisoner, which were not very convenient for him to answer. He continued to parry them, however, with great dexterity for some time; but at length, finding that this sort of cross-examination could not go on much longer without leading to his detection, he turned suddenly to Sir John Hotham, and asked him in a low voice if the guard had given him the message which he had sent.

"Yes," replied the governor, "I received the message; what is it you have to communicate?"

"Something, sir, for your private ear," continued the earl, still speaking in French; "a matter which you will find of much importance, and which you will not regret to have known; but I can only discover it to you if you grant me an interview with yourself alone."

"Faith, I must hear more about you, sir, before I can do that," replied Hotham. "Come hither with me, and I will speak to you for a moment in the window."

Thus saying, he led the way to the farther end of the room, where a deep bay-window looked out over the town. The distance from the rest of the company was considerable, and the angle of the wall ensured that no distinct sound could reach the other part of the hall; but still Lord Beverley determined, if possible, to obtain a greater degree of privacy, for he knew not what might be the effect of the sudden disclosure he was about to make upon the governor himself.

"Can I not speak with you in another room, sir?" he asked, still using the French tongue.

"That is quite impossible," answered Sir John Hotham; "you can say what you have to say here. Speak low, and no ears but mine will hear you."

The earl looked down, and then, raising his eyes suddenly to the governor's face, he asked in English,—

"Do you know me, Sir John Hotham?"

The governor started, and looked at him attentively for a moment or two, but then replied in a decided tone,—

"No, I do not, sir. How should I?"

"Well, then," replied the earl, "I will try whether I know Sir John Hotham, and whether he be the same man of honour I have always taken him to be. You see before you, sir, the Earl of Beverley; and you are well aware that the activity I have displayed in the service of the king, and the number of persons whom I have brought over to his interest, by showing them that, whatever might be the case in times past, their duty to their king and their country is now the same,—you are aware, I say, that these causes have rendered the Parliament my implacable enemies; and I do believe that, in confiding as I do this day to you, instead of keeping up the disguise that I have maintained hitherto, I place myself in the hands of one who is too much a gentleman to use that information to my disadvantage, and give me up to the fury of my adversaries."

The astonishment which appeared on Sir John Hotham's face while the earl was making this communication might have attracted the attention of his son and the rest of the company, had not his back been fortunately turned towards them. He gazed earnestly on the earl's countenance, however, and then, recollecting his features, wondered that he had not discovered him at once. So transparent did the disguise seem as soon as he knew the secret, that he could scarcely persuade himself that the other gentlemen present would be long deceived, and he was now only anxious to get the earl out of the room as soon as possible; for many of those curious little motives which influence all human actions made him determine in an instant to justify the honourable character attributed to him.

"Say no more, say no more, sir!" he replied in a low tone, smoothing down his countenance as best he might; "we cannot talk upon this subject now. Rest satisfied, however, that you will not be sorry for the trust you have reposed in me, and will find me the same man as you supposed. I will see you again in private whenever I may meet with a convenient opportunity; but in the meantime I am afraid you

must content yourself with the poor accommodation which you have, for any change in it would beget suspicion, and I have shrewd and evil eyes upon me here; so I must now send you away at once. Here, guard," he continued, "take the prisoner back. Let him be well used, and provided with all things necessary, but at the same time have a strict eye upon him, and suffer no one to communicate with him but myself."

Lord Beverley bowed and withdrew, and Hotham, with strong signs of agitation still in his countenance, returned to his companions, saying,—

"That Frenchman is a shrewd fellow, and knows more of the king's councils than I could have imagined; but I must go and write a despatch to the Parliament, for he has told me things that they will be glad to know, and I trust that in a few days I shall learn more from him still."

Thus speaking, he retired from the hall, and one of the gentlemen present inquired of another who was standing near,—

"Did you not think that what they were saying just now in the window sounded very like English?"

"Oh," replied Colonel Hotham, with a sneer, "my father's French has quite an English tone. He changes the words, it is true, but not the accent."

In the meanwhile the earl was carried back to the blockhouse, and towards evening he received a few words, written on a scrap of paper, telling him that the governor would be with him about ten o'clock that night.

This was a mark of favour and consideration which Lord Beverley scarcely expected, notwithstanding the difference of rank between himself and Sir John Hotham, and the promises of honourable dealing which the latter had made. There were also signs of a willingness to attend to his comfort, which were even more consolatory in the conclusions he drew from them than in the acts themselves. Poor Sinbad the sailor, when he fell into the hands of the cannibal blacks, looked upon all the good cheer that they placed before him as merely the means employed to fatten him previous to killing and eating him; but, as we never had such anthropophagous habits in Great Britain, even during the great rebellion itself, the earl, when he saw sundry much more savoury dishes provided for his dinner than he had hitherto been favoured with, and a bottle of very good wine to wash them down withal, received them as a mark of the governor's good intentions, and an indication that there was some probability of his imprisonment coming to an end by a more pleasant process than a walk to the scaffold.

He ate and drank then with renewed hope, and saw the sun go down with pleasure, totally forgetting Captain Barecolt's promise to see him at night, which, if he had remembered it, might have somewhat disturbed his serenity.

I know not whether the people of Hull are still a tribe early in their habits, but certainly such was the case in those days; and towards nine o'clock, or a little after, the noises of the great town began to die away, and Silence to resume her reign through the place. The watch, who had a great horror of everything like merriment, as the reader may have in some degree perceived, took care to suffer neither shouting nor brawling in the streets of the good city after dark; and though, from the windows of the room in which he was confined, the noble earl saw many a lantern pass along, it was still with a sober and steady pace; and, with his usual imaginative activity of mind, he amused himself with fancying the character and occupations of the various persons who thus flitted before his eyes, drawing many a comment and meditative reflection upon everything in man's fate and nature.

The lanterns, however, like the sounds, grew less and less frequent; and near a quarter of an hour had passed without his seeing one, when at length the clock of the neighbouring church slowly struck the hour of ten, pausing long upon every dull tone, which seemed like the voice of Time regretting the moments that had flown.

In about ten minutes more the sentry before the blockhouse challenged some one who approached rather nearer than he thought proper to his post. A signal word was given in reply, and the next moment the sounds of bolts being withdrawn and keys turned in the lock were heard, announcing the approach of a visitor. The opening door, as the earl expected, showed the stout and somewhat heavy person of Sir John Hotham, who entered with a sort of furtive look behind him, as if he were afraid of being watched.

"Keep at some distance in front," he said, turning to the guard; "and do not let any one, coming from the side of my house, approach within a hundred yards." Thus saying, he shut the door of the room, locked it, and put the key in his pocket; then, turning to the prisoner, he observed, "It is a terrible thing, my lord, to have nothing but spies about one; and yet such is my case here. I do not know what I have done to deserve this."

"It is the most natural thing in the world, Sir John," said the earl, shaking him warmly by the hand: "when perverse, rash, and rebellious men know that they have to deal with a gentleman of honour, who, however much he may be attached to liberty, is well disposed towards his sovereign, they naturally suspect and spy upon him."

"You judge me rightly, my lord, you judge me rightly," replied Sir John Hotham. "I have always been a friend equally to my country and my king; and deeply do I lament the discord which has arisen between his majesty and the Parliament. But I see you understand my conduct well, my lord, and need not be told that I entertain very different principles from

the men who have driven things to this strait. I vow to God I have always entertained the highest affection and sense of duty towards his majesty, and lament deeply to think that my refusing to open the gates of Hull, when the king sent to require reception for his forces, will always be considered as the beginning, and perhaps the cause, of this civil war, whereas I did it in my own defence."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the earl. "The king is not aware that such is the case; for, when many people assured his majesty that there must have been some error in the business, he has replied often, 'God grant it be so; for I always held Sir John Hotham to be a man of singular uprightness, and well affected towards myself, until he ventured to shut his gates in the king's face.'"

"Ay, sir," exclaimed the governor; "both the king and myself have been greatly deceived; and I will now tell you what I never told to any one, which I will beseech you, when we find means to set you free, to report to his majesty, that he may judge favourably of me. There were certain men, whom I have since discovered to be arrant knaves, and employed by the more furious persons of the Parliament to deceive me, who assured me, with every protestation of concern for my safety, that it was the king's intention, as soon as he got into Hull, to hang me without form of trial further than a mere summary court-martial."

"It was false, sir! it was false altogether, I assure you!" replied the earl. "Nothing was ever further from the king's intention."

"I know it—I know it now," answered Sir John Hotham; "but I believed it at the time. However, to speak of what more nearly concerns you, my lord, I came hither to tell you that, as you have so frankly put yourself in my hands, I will in no degree betray your trust; and I much wish you to consider in what way, and upon what pretext, I can set you at liberty, so that you may safely go whithersoever you will. But there is one thing you must remember, that the secret of who and what you are, and of my wish to treat you kindly, must be kept inviolably between you and me; for there is not a man here whom I can trust, and especially my own son, who is one of the worst and most evil-intentioned men towards the king and his own father in all the realm."

"The only way that I can see," replied the earl, "will be for me to pass for a Frenchman still, and for you to make it appear that I am willing to purchase my liberty by giving you at once some information regarding his majesty's designs, and obtaining more for you hereafter. But so sure am I of your good intentions towards me, that I fear not to remain here several days, if I may but hope that, through my poor mediation, you and the king may be reconciled to each other. It is indeed a sad and terrible thing, that a handful of ill-disposed men, such as those who now rule in the Parliament, should be able to overwhelm this country with bloodshed and devastation, when the king himself is willing to grant his people everything that they can rightly and justly demand; and, moreover, that they should have the power, when their intention is clearly, not alone to overthrow this or that monarch, but to destroy and abolish monarchy itself, to involve gentlemen of high esteem, such as yourself, in acts which they abhor, and which must first prove disastrous to the country and ultimately destructive to themselves.

"Do not let them deceive you, Sir John," he continued; "this struggle can have but one termination, as you will plainly see if you consider a few points. You cannot for a moment doubt that the turbulence and exactions of these men have already alienated from them the affections of the great body of the people. The king is now at the head of a powerful force, which is daily increasing. A great supply of ammunition and arms has just been received. The fleet is entirely at his majesty's disposal, and ready to appear before any place against which he may direct it. And, although he is unwilling to employ foreign troops against his rebellious subjects till the last extremity, yet you must evidently perceive that every prince in Christendom is personally interested in supporting him, and will do it as soon as asked. Nay, more; I will tell you, what is not generally known, that the Prince of Orange is now preparing to come over, at the head of his army; and you may well suppose that his first stroke will be at Hull, which cannot resist him three days."

Sir John Hotham looked somewhat bewildered and confounded by all these arguments, and exclaimed in a musing tone, "How is it to be done? that is the only question; how is it to be done?"

"If you mean, Sir John," continued Lord Beverley, "how is peace to be restored to the country? methinks it may be easily done; but first I would have you consider what glory and renown would accrue to that man who should ward off all these terrible events; who, by his sole power and authority, and by setting a noble example to his countrymen, should pave the way to a reconciliation between King Charles and his Parliament; and at the same time secure the rights and liberties of the people and the stability of the throne. I will ask you if you are not sure that both monarch and people, seeing themselves delivered from the horrors of a civil war, would not join in overwhelming him with honours and rewards of all kinds, and whether his name would not descend to posterity as the preserver of his country. You are the man, Sir John Hotham, who can do all this. You are the man who can obtain this glorious name. The surrender of Hull to the king would at once remedy the mistakes committed on both parts, would crush the civil war in the germ, would strengthen the good intentions of all the wise and better men in the Parliament, would make the whole

country rise as one man to cast off the treason in which it has unwillingly taken part; and for my own self, I can only say that men attribute to me some influence both with the king and queen, and that all which I do possess should be employed to obtain for you due recompense for the services you have rendered your country."

Hotham was evidently touched and moved; for so skilfully had the earl introduced every subject that could affect the various passions of which he was susceptible, that at every word some new pleader had risen up in the bosom of the governor, to advocate the same course upon which Lord Beverley was urging him. Now it was fear that spoke; now hope; now anger at the suspicions entertained by the Parliament; now expectations from the king. Pride, vanity, ambition—all had their word; and good Sir John's face betrayed the agitation of his mind, so that the earl was in no slight hope of speedily gaining one of the most important converts that could be made to the royal cause, when, to the surprise of both, the door of the chamber in which they were was violently shaken from without, and a voice was heard muttering, with a tremendous oath,—

"They have taken the key out; curse me if I don't force the lock off with my dagger!"

Sir John Hotham started, and looked towards the door with fear and trepidation; for he expected nothing less than to see the face of his son or some other of the violent men who had been sent down by the Parliament; and, to say truth, not the countenance of a personage whose appearance in his own proper person is generally deprecated by even those who have the closest connection with him *sub rosa* could have been more unpleasant to the governor of Hull. The Earl of Beverley started, too, with no very comfortable feelings; for not only was he unwilling to have his conversation at that moment interrupted, but moreover, dear reader, he recognised at once the tones of the magnanimous Captain Barecolt.

"It is my son, on my life!" cried Hotham in a low tone. "What, in the fiend's name, is to be done? This insolence is insufferable; and yet I would give my right hand not to be found here! Hark! On my life, he is forcing the lock!"

"Stay, stay!" whispered the earl. "Get behind the bed; but first give me the key. I pledge you my word, Sir John, not even to attempt an escape; and, moreover, to send this person away without discovering you. Leave him to me—leave him to me! You may trust me."

"Oh, willingly—willingly!" cried Sir John, giving him the key, and drawing back behind the bed. "For heaven's sake, do not let him find me!"

The earl took the key, and approached the door; but before we relate what followed, we must turn for a moment to explain the sudden appearance of Captain Barecolt.

CHAPTER XXI.

Captain Barecolt was not, according to the old proverb, like a garden full of weeds; for, although he was undoubtedly a man of words, he was also a man of deeds, as the reader may have already remarked, and the deeds which he had performed since we last left him sitting in the parlour of Mrs. White were manifold and various. His first expedition was to the chamber of Arrah Neil, where the worthy landlady's sense of decorum, as well as her privilege of curiosity, kept her present during the conference.

Poor Arrah — although at one time she certainly had not been impressed with the deepest sense of the personal merits of Captain Deciduous Barecolt—had seen enough of his conduct in the skirmish which took place at the bridge to entertain a much higher respect for him than before; and, even had not such been the case, there is something in the very sight of persons whom we have beheld in companionship with those we love, which, by awakening sweet associations,—those pleasant door-keepers of the heart,—renders their presence cheering to us in the hour of misfortune and distress.

Mrs. White, too, upon Captain Barecolt's own statement, had assured Arrah that he came expressly to deliver her; and she looked upon her escape from the clutches of Mr. Dry as now quite certain, with the aid of the good landlady, and the more vigorous assistance of Barecolt's long arm and long sword. She greeted him gladly, then, and with a bright smile; but Barecolt, when he now saw her, could scarcely believe that she was the same person with whom he had marched two days during the absence from Bishop's Merton, not alone from the change in her dress, though that, of course, made a very great difference, but from the look of intelligence and mind which her whole countenance displayed, and from the total absence of that lost and bewildered expression which had been before so frequently present on her face. Her great beauty, which had then been often clouded by that strange shadow that we have so frequently mentioned, was now lighted up, like a fair landscape first seen in the dim twilight of the morning, when the sun rises upon it in all the majesty of light.

"Do not be the least afraid, my dear young lady," said Captain Barecolt, after the first congratulations of their meeting was over, and he had quieted down his surprise and admiration. "Do not be at all afraid. I will deliver you, if the gates should be guarded by fiery dragons. Not only have I a thousand times accomplished enterprises to which this, of circumventing the dull burgesses of Hull, is no more than eating the mites of a cheese off the point of a knife; but here we have to assist us good Mrs. White, one of the most excellent women that ever lived upon the face of this

earth. It is true I have but had the pleasure and honour of her acquaintance for the space of one hour and three-quarters; but when you come to consider that I have been called upon to converse and deal with, and investigate and examine, in the most perilous circumstances and in the most awful situations, many millions of my fellow-creatures, of every different shade, variety, and complexion of mind, you will easily understand that it needs but a glance for me to estimate and appreciate the excellence of a person so well disposed as Mrs. White."

"Oh yes!" cried Arrah, interrupting him; "I know that she is kind and good, and will do everything she can to help and deliver me. She was kind to me long ago, and one can never forget kindness. But when shall we go, Captain Barecolt? Cannot we go to-night?"

"That is impossible, my dear young lady," replied Barecolt; "for there are many things to be done. In the first instance, these papers, which Mrs. White talks of—they must be obtained, if possible. Has this man got them about him, do you think?"

"I cannot tell," replied Arrah; "I do not even know that he has got them at all. I only know that the cottage was stripped when I came back, and that they, with everything else, were gone."

"Oh, he has got them! he has got them, my dear child!" cried Mrs. White; "for depend upon it, that if he did not know you were a very different person from Sergeant Neil's granddaughter, just as well as I do, he would never be so anxious about marrying you—a weazened old red herring! I dare say he has got them safe in his trunk-mail."

"I will go," said Barecolt, "and cut them out of his heart;" and at the same moment he rose, laid his hand upon his dagger, and strode towards the door.

"Don't do him any mischief—don't do him any mischief in my house!" cried Mrs. White, laying her hand upon the captain's arm. "Pray, remember, captain, there will be inquiry made, as sure as you are alive. You had better not take them till you are quite ready to go."

"Thou art a wise woman, Mrs. White," replied Captain Barecolt,—"thou art a wise woman, and I will forbear. I will but ascertain whether he has these papers, while yet he lies in the mud of drunkenness, and leave the appropriation of them till an after period."

Thus saying, he quitted the room; and having marked, with all his shrewd perception, the door which had been opened and shut when the reverend and respectable Mr. Dry of Longsoaken was carried tipsy to his bed, he walked straight into his room with a candle in his hand, and, approaching the drunken man, gazed on his face, to see that he was still in that state of insensibility to what was passing round him which was necessary to his present purposes. Mr. Dry was happily snoring unconsciously, almost in a state of apoplexy; and approaching a large pair of saddle-bags, Barecolt took them up, laid them on a chair, and opened them without either ceremony or scruple. The wardrobe of Mr. Dry was soon exposed to view: a short cloak, a black coat, a clean stiff band, well starched and ironed, in case he should be called upon to hold forth; a pair of brown breeches and grey stockings; three shirts of delicately fine linen, and sundry other articles. These were soon cast upon the ground, and the arm of the valorous captain plunged up to the elbow in the heart of the bags, searching about for anything having the feel of paper.

For some minutes his perquisition was vain; but at length, in drawing out his hand suddenly, the knuckles struck against the lining of the bag, at a spot where something like a button made itself apparent; and feeling more closely, the worthy captain discovered an inside pocket.

Into that his fingers were soon dipped; and with an air of triumph he drew forth some three sheets of written paper, and, carrying them to the candle, examined them minutely. What was his disappointment, however, when the first words that struck his eyes were—"Habakkuk ii. 5; 2 Chronicles ii. 7, 9; Micah vi.; Lamentations iii. 7; Amos ii. 4.—For three trangressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof."

"The hypocritical old swine!" cried Barecolt; "what have we got next?" and, turning over the page, he looked at the paper which was enclosed in the other, which he found to be something a little more important, namely, a letter from the Parliamentary Colonel Thistleton to Mr. Dry, informing him that he would be at Bishop's Merton on the day after the date thereof, and begging him to keep a watchful eye upon the malignant lord, that no changes might take place till he arrived; thus establishing beyond all manner of doubt worthy Mr. Dry's collusion in the visit of the Parliamentary commission to the house of Lord Walton.

The next paper, which was the only one now remaining, seemed to puzzle Captain Barecolt more than even Mr. Dry's list of texts. It was evidently a paper of memoranda, in his own handwriting, but so brief that, without some clue, little could be made of it. At the top stood the name of Hugh O'Donnell; then came the words, "Whose daughter was her mother?" Below that was written, "Are there any of them living? What's the county? Ulster, it would seem? Sequestrated? or attainted? Where did the money come from? How much a year? What will he take?"

Bearing this away, after having made another search in the bag, and thrown it down upon the scattered articles of clothing which remained upon the floor, worthy Captain Barecolt re-trod his steps to the room of Arrah Neil, and there, with the fair girl herself and the worthy landlady, he pored over the paper, and endeavoured to gain some further insight into its meaning.

Conjectures enough were formed, but with them we will not trouble the reader. Suffice it that Captain Barecolt determined to copy the

paper, which being done, he replaced it with Mr. Dry's apparel in that worthy gentleman's bags, and then left him to sleep off his drunkenness, wishing him heartily that sort of sickening headache which is the usual consequence of such intemperance as he had indulged in that night.

To Arrah Neil he subsequently explained that his various avocations in the town of Hull would give him enough to do during the following day, but that he did hope and trust, about midnight, or very early the next morning, to be able to guide her safely forth from the gates of the town, together with a friend of his who, he explained to her, was still a captive in the hands of the governor.

After bidding her adieu, he descended once more to the little parlour of Mrs. White, and there held a long and confidential conference with her regarding his proceedings on the following day. He found the good lady all that he could have desired, a staunch royalist at heart, and thoroughly acquainted with the character, views, and principles of a multitude of the officers and soldiers of the train-bands. She told him whom he could depend upon, and whom he could not; where, when, and how they were to be found, and what were the best means of rendering them accessible to his solicitations. She also furnished him with the address of Mr. Hugh O'Donnell, and, having gained all this information, the worthy captain retired to bed to rise prepared for action on the following day.

Profound were his slumbers. No dream shook the long and cumbrous body that lay there, like some colossal column fallen on the sands of the desert, and he scarcely moved or stirred a finger till the young morning peeped with her grey eye in at the window, when up he started, rubbing his head, and exclaiming, "There's the trumpet, by ——!"

It was the first vision he had had; but in a moment or two he was wide awake again, and, remembering his appointment with the governor of Hull, he plunged his head into cold water, wiped it with the towels provided, drew his beard into a neat point, and, putting on his clothes, again descended to seek for some breakfast before he set out.

He had not got through half the flagon of beer, however, nor demolished above a pound of beef, when Captain Jenkins arrived, and found him speaking execrable English to Nancy in order to hurry her with some fried eggs which she was preparing as an addition to the meal.

"Begar, I never vas see such voman as de English cooks! Dem can no more make de omlet dan dey can fly. Vait but von leetle meenute, my dear Captain Jenkin, and I go vid you."

"I can't wait," said Captain Jenkins in a rough tone; "it's time to be there now. If you had lodged at the 'Rose,' we should not have had half so far to go."

"Ah, dat is very true! dat is very true!" cried Barecolt. "I lodge dere anoder time; but if we must go, vy, den, here goes," and, putting the tankard to his mouth, with one long and prodigious draught he brought the liquor within to the bottom.

Being then once more conducted to the presence of the governor, he was detained some little time, while Sir John gave various orders and directions, and then set out with him upon a tour of the fortifications, followed, as we have represented the party, by three soldiers, Captain Jenkins having been dismissed for the time. If Barecolt, however, had won upon the governor during their first interview, on this second occasion he ingratiated himself still farther with the worthy officer. Nor, indeed, was it without cause that Barecolt rose high in the opinion of Sir John, for he had his own sense of what was honest and right, though it was a somewhat twisted and perverted one, and he would not, on any account, so long as his advice was asked, and likely to be taken, have given wrong and dangerous counsel upon the pretence of friendship and service.

He pointed out, then, to the governor, with great shrewdness and discrimination, numerous weak points in the defences, gave him various hints for strengthening them without the loss of much time; and, while pausing before the blockhouse in which he knew Lord Beverley was confined, he drew upon the ground a plan of a small fort, which he showed the governor might be very serviceable in the defence of the town upon the river side.

Having now gone nearly half round the walls, and being pressed by hunger as much as business, Sir John returned to break his fast, and once more placed Captain Barecolt under the guidance of Jenkins; adding a hint, however, to the latter that his suspicions of the Frenchman were removed, and that every assistance was to be given him in carrying out the suggestions he had made.

Barecolt's difficulty now was, how to get rid of his companion; but as the citizen-soldier was somewhat pursy and heavy in his temperament, our worthy friend contrived, in the space of a few hours, to cast him into such a state of perspiration and fatigue, by rapid motion from one part of the town to the other, that he was ready to drop. In the course of these perambulations, he led him, as we have seen, once more past the blockhouse, in order to confer for a moment with Lord Beverley; after which he brought him dexterously into the neighbourhood of his own dwelling, and then told him, if he would go and get his dinner, while he did the same, they would meet again in two hours at a spot which he named.

The proposal was a blessed relief to the captain of the train-bands, who internally promised himself to take very good care to give the long-legged Frenchman as little of his company as possible.

Barecolt, however, though his appetite, as the reader knows, was of a capacious and ever-ready kind, sacrificed inclination to what he

considered duty, and hastened, without breaking bread, to seek two of those persons whom Mrs. White had pointed out to him as worthy of all confidence, and likely to engage in the adventure which he had in hand.

He had some difficulty, however, in making the first of these, who was an ancient of the train-bands, and well affected to the king, repose any trust in him — for the man was prudent, and somewhat suspicious by nature, and he entertained shrewd doubts as to the honesty of Captain Barecolt's purpose towards him. He shook his head, assumed a blank and somewhat unmeaning countenance, vowed he did not understand, and, when the worthy captain spoke more plainly, told him that he had better take care how he talked such stuff in Hull.

On this hint Barecolt withdrew, suspecting that the information he had received from his landlady was not the most accurate in the world. He resolved, however, to make another effort, and try to gain assistance from the second person she had mentioned, though he, having displayed his loyalty somewhat too openly, was not one to be placed in a situation of confidence by the officers of the Parliament.

The abode of this man, who was a sign-painter by trade, named Falgate, was with much difficulty discovered up two pair of stairs in a back street; but when Captain Barecolt had climbed to his high dwelling, he found a personage of a frank and joyful countenance hewing away at the remains of a leg of mutton on a large wooden trencher, and washing his food down with copious draughts of very good beer. His propensity towards these creature comforts was a favourable omen in the eyes of our worthy captain; but he was joyfully sur-surprised when good Diggory Falgate started up, with his mouth all shining with mutton fat, and embraced him heartily, exclaiming, "Welcome, my noble captain! I have been expecting you this last hour."

He proceeded, however, speedily to explain that he had looked in at the "Swan" a short time before to take his morning draught, and that the good landlady had given him information of Captain Barecolt's character and objects.

With him all arrangements were very easy. Diggory Falgate was ready for any enterprise that might present itself; and, with the gay and dashing spirit which reigned amongst Cavaliers of high and low degree, he was just as willing to walk up to a cannon's mouth in the service of the king as to a tankard of strong waters on his own behalf, to cut down a Roundhead, to make love to a pretty maiden, to spend his money, or to sing his song.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he exclaimed, as Barecolt intimated to him the rebuff that he met with from the ancient of the train-bands; "Billy Hazard is a cunning rogue. I'll bet you a pint of sack that he thought you some Roundhead come to take him in. Stay here, stay here, and finish my tankard for me. I'll run and fetch him, and you will soon see a difference."

Barecolt willingly agreed to play the part his companion proposed, and before he had made free more than twice with the large black jug that graced his new friend's table, Falgate had himself returned, followed by his more sedate and cautious acquaintance.

"Here he is, here he is! as wise as a whipping-post," exclaimed the sign-painter, "which receives all the lashes, and never says a word. There sits Captain Barecolt, ancient Hazard; so to him, and tell him what you would do to serve the king."

"A great deal," replied Hazard. "I beg your pardon, sir, for giving you such a rough answer just now, but I did not know you."

"Always be cautious, always be cautious, mine ancient," replied Barecolt; "so will you be a general in time, and a good one; but now let us to business as fast as possible. You must know that there's a prisoner—"

"Ay, I know, in the blockhouse," cried Diggory Falgate, "and he is to be taken out to-night. Isn't it so, noble captain? Now I'll bet you three radishes to a dozen of crowns that this is some man of great consequence."

Barecolt nodded his head.

"Is it the king?" asked Falgate in a whisper.

"Phoo, nonsense!" cried Barecolt. "The king's at the head of his army, and, before ten days are over, will march into Hull with drum and colours, will hang the governor, disband the garrison, and overthrow the walls. Why, the place can no more hold out against the power that the king has than a fresh egg can resist the side of a frying-pan. No; this gentleman is a man of the greatest consequence, in whom the king places vast reliance, and he must be got out at all risks. If you can but get rid of that cursed guard, if it be but for ten minutes, I will do all the rest."

"That will be no difficult matter," replied Hazard, after thinking for a moment. "Here, Diggory and I will manage all that; but how will you get him out of the town when you've done?"

"That's all arranged already," replied Barecolt: "I have a pass for visiting the walls and gates at any hour between sunrise and sunset, to inspect and repair the fortifications, forsooth: I will manage the whole of that matter; but how will you contrive to get away the guard?"

Diggory and his companion consulted for a moment together, and at length the former clapped his hands, exclaiming, "That will do, that will do! Hark ye, Captain Barecolt! we are not particularly strict soldiers here, and I will get the fellow away to drink with me."

"He won't do it!" exclaimed Barecolt. "It's death by the law."

"Then I'll quarrel with him," replied Diggory; "and in either case up comes mine ancient here, rates him soundly, relieves him of his guard, sends him back to the guard-house, and bids him order down the next upon the roll. In

the meanwhile you get your man out, and away with him, locking the door behind you; and no one knows anything of the matter."

"It will do, it will do!" cried Barecolt; and after some further conversation, in which all the particulars of their plan were arranged, Barecolt took his leave, appointing them to meet him at the "Swan" that night towards ten o'clock, and proceeded on his way to seek out the house of Mr. Hugh O'Donnell.

CHAPTER XXII.

THERE was a long row of sheds at the far end of the town of Hull, open towards the Humber, and enclosed on three sides towards the town. A little patch of green lay on one side the city wall; on the other, between the sheds and the river, ran a small footpath, and behind rose a good-looking dwelling of two storeys high. With a quick but quiet step,—unusually quiet, indeed, for he generally displayed his high opinion of himself in the elasticity of his toes,—Captain Barecolt pursued the little path till he came in front of the sheds, and then paused to reconnoitre the ground.

He first looked into the open side of the buildings; but nothing did he see, only sundry stockfish hanging up in rows by the tails, together with a heap of coals in one corner, and two large bales or packages covered with canvas in another. He then looked over the Humber, where the sun was struggling with some misty clouds, gilding the sky, and glittering on the calm, unruffled waters. There was nothing of great importance to be discovered on that side either, and the only object that seemed to attract the attention of the worthy captain was the top of a boat's mast, which rose over the bank between him and the river.

As soon as he perceived it, he turned an ear in that direction, and thought he heard people speaking, upon which he advanced quietly to the top of the bank and looked down. There was a man in the boat, apparently about to push off, and another standing on the shore, giving him some directions; and the first sight of the latter showed our friend that he had not mistaken his way; for there he beheld the stout, tall, good-looking, elderly man whom he had seen with Mrs. White on the preceding evening.

His back was turned to Captain Barecolt, and, as the latter stood waiting till the boat had pushed off, he heard him say, "Well, don't make a noise about it. Do everything easily and quietly."

The man in the boat, however, at once caught a sight of the intruder upon their conversation, and pointed towards him with his hand, upon which Mr. Hugh O'Donnell turned quickly round, with an inquiring and somewhat stern expression, and then advanced straight up to Captain Barecolt, while the boat rowed away.

"Pray, sir, are you wanting me?" demanded Mr. O'Donnell, with a strong touch of that peculiar percussion of the breath which has acquired—why or wherefore who can tell?—the name of "brogue," regarding the captain, at the same time, with not the most amicable glance in the world.

"Yes, Master O'Donnell," replied Barecolt in good plain English, "I am wanting you; and by your leave we must have a little conversation together."

Hugh O'Donnell gazed at him with some surprise, for he recollected him well as the French officer who had visited the sign of the "Swan" on the preceding evening; but he was a cautious man, notwithstanding his Milesian blood, long accustomed to deal with somewhat dangerous affairs, and well aware that the most indiscreet of all passions is surprise; and therefore, without appearing to recognise his visitor, he said, "If our conversation is to be at all long, sir, it had better be within doors than without."

"It may be long," replied Barecolt drily; "and yet it cannot be very long, for I have not too much time to spare; but, whether long or short, it had better be where we can have no eavesdroppers, Mr. O'Donnell, and so we will walk in."

Barecolt followed him to the house, where a clean and respectable old woman-servant was seen sanding the floor of a parlour, the boards of which were scrubbed to a marvellous whiteness, though the walls, to say the truth, were somewhat dingy, and a strong flavour of tobacco smoke rather detracted from the purity of the air. That odour, however, was no objection to the nose of Captain Barecolt, who cast himself into a chair, while the master of the mansion sent away the servant and closed the door.

As soon as this process was complete, the worthy captain fixed his eyes upon Mr. O'Donnell, and demanded, "You recollect me, of course, sir?"

"I think I have seen your face somewhere," replied the Irishman; "but, Lord love you! I never recollect anything after it is over. It's better not, sir. I make life a ready-money business, and keep neither receipts nor bills."

"Quite right, Mr. O'Donnell," replied Captain Barecolt; "but yet I think I must get you to draw a draft upon the past. That word or two from Mrs. White will tell you what it is about;" and he handed his companion across the little round oaken table a small bit of paper.

O'Donnell took it, read the contents, and then mused for a minute or two, tapping the table with his fingers.

"Well, sir," he said at length, "what is it you want to know?"

"All that you can tell me about the young lady whom they call Arrah Neil."

"Oh, sir, I will tell you all I know about her in a minute," replied the other: "she is now at the 'Swan,' Mrs. White's own house, under the care—or, if you like it better, in the

hands of a very reverend gentleman called Master Dry of Longsoaken."

"That won't do, Mr. O'Donnell, that won't do!" exclaimed Barecolt. "What I want to know is about the past, not the present—of which I know more than you do, Mr. O'Donnell."

"I never seek to know anything of other people's business," replied O'Donnell drily. "I have enough to do to attend to my own."

"Which is the supplying Roman Catholic gentry with salt fish for fast days, together with beads, missals, crucifixes, and other little trinkets for private use," answered Barecolt, who had been using his eyes and forming his own conclusions from numerous indications apparently trifling.

O'Donnell, without any change of expression, gazed at him gravely, and the captain continued: "But that is nothing to the purpose, my good friend. I see you are a prudent man, and I daresay you have cause to be so. However, I will tell you why I inquire; and then we will see whether you will not be kind enough to a poor young lady to give her some information concerning her own affairs, of which, from the death of poor old Sergeant Neil, and his papers having been carried off by this old puritanical hunks Dry, she has been kept in ignorance. You must know that this young lady has found great and powerful friends in the Lord Walton and his sister."

"Then why did they suffer her to fall into this man's hands?" demanded O'Donnell.

"Because they could not prevent it," replied Barecolt; and he went on to give a full account of the march from Bishop's Merton and the skirmish which had taken place upon the road, with all of which we need not trouble the reader, whose imagination can supply or not, as it pleases, Captain Barecolt's account of his own deeds of arms. From those deeds, after due commemoration, he went on to speak of Lord Walton's anxiety for poor Arrah Neil's safety; and though we cannot presume to say his tale was plain or unvarnished either, yet there was enough of truth about it to make some change in Mr. O'Donnell's views.

"Where is Lord Walton to be found?" demanded the latter.

"He is with the king at Nottingham," answered Barecolt.

"Well, then, he shall hear from me before long," replied O'Donnell.

"You had better let me bear him your message, my good sir," said the captain. "You may judge, from my being entrusted here with such important business, that I am one in whom you may place the most unlimited confidence."

"Perhaps so, sir," answered O'Donnell; "but if I were such a fool or such a scoundrel as to betray other people's secrets, how should I expect that you would keep them?"

"That is very true," rejoined Barecolt; "but if you do not tell them to me, and help me too to get the young lady out of this town of Hull, you will be compelled to tell them to her enemies, and may make her situation a great deal worse than it is now."

"They can't compel me; I defy them!" cried O'Donnell sharply; "and help you to get her out of Hull I will with all my heart, but how is that to be done?" The next moment he asked, in a meditative tone, "What makes you think they will ask me any questions?"

"I not only think they will ask you questions, Mr. O'Donnell, but I will tell you what those questions will be," replied the captain; and taking a paper from his pocket he went on: "Before many hours are over you will have Mr. Dry himself here, and perhaps the justices, if not the governor, and you will be asked, 'Whose daughter was her mother?—are any of her family living?—in what county?—in Ulster?—whether the estates were sequestrated or the blood attainted?—where the money came from you used to send to poor Neil, and how much it was a-year?'"

"Oh, by ——, they must have got hold of a good clue!" exclaimed O'Donnell, with more agitation than he had hitherto displayed.

"That they have, Master O'Donnell," replied Barecolt; "but if Dry comes alone, as he will most likely do at first, he will ask you one other question before he tries to force you, and that is: how much you will take to tell him the whole story, that he may possess himself of the property and force the poor child into marrying him."

"Ay, he's a reasonable man, I daresay, Master Dry," replied the Irishman, with a sarcastic smile; "but he will find himself mistaken: and as to forcing me, they can't. Moreover, for your own questions, good sir, all I shall say is this: that you may tell Lord Walton that he must take care of this poor young lady."

"That he is willing enough to do without my telling," answered Barecolt.

"Ay, but he must take care of her like the apple of his eye," replied O'Donnell; "for if any harm happen to her, he will never forgive himself. He is a kind, good man—is he not?"

"As gallant a cavalier as ever lived," said Barecolt.

"And young?" demanded O'Donnell.

"Some seven or eight-and-twenty, I should guess," was the answer.

The master of the house mused.

"That may be fortunate or unfortunate, as it happens," he said at length; "at all events, he ought to have intimation of what he is doing. Tell him that he shall hear more from me very shortly—as soon as possible—as soon as I can get leave. And now to speak of how to get her out of Hull."

"But will you not let me tell Lord Walton who she is?" demanded Barecolt.

"If Sergeant Neil has told him anything already—well," replied O'Donnell; "if not, he shall hear more soon; but at all events tell him to cherish and protect her as he would one of

his own kindred; for if he do not, and have any more heart than a stone, he will repent it bitterly. No more on that head, master: now for your plans."

"Why, Master O'Donnell," replied Captain Barecolt, "my plans, like your secrets, are my own; and I do not tell them easily, especially when I get nothing in return."

"But you said you wished me to help you to get the young lady out of Hull," rejoined O'Donnell. "How am I to do so without knowing what you intend to do?"

"I will show you in a minute, Master O'Donnell," replied Barecolt. "What I need is horse-flesh; and, as far as I can see, very little of it is to be found in Hull. The governor walks afoot; the officers of the garrison, such as it is, trudge upon their own legs; and I have seen nothing with four feet but sundry cats, half a dozen dogs, and every now and then a fat horse in a coal-cart. I want beasts to carry us, Master O'Donnell; that is my need: and if you can find means to furnish us with them, I will contrive to get the young lady out."

"Oh, there are plenty of horses in Hull," answered O'Donnell; "but how did you come hither?"

"By sea," replied his companion; "but that matters not. If you can bring or send three good horses, one with a woman's saddle, to the first village on the road to York,—I forget the name of the place,—you will do me a service, aid poor Arrah Neil, and be well paid for your pains."

"To Newlands, you mean," said O'Donnell; "but Newlands is a long way for you to go on foot. 'Tis more than two miles, and if you are caught you are lost. Stay—there is a little low ale-house by the green side, just a mile from the town gates. The horses shall be there; but at what time?"

"Some time before daybreak to-morrow," replied Barecolt; "for as soon as I see the first ray of the sun, I am off with my companions."

"Have you more than one?" demanded the Irishman.

"The lady—and a gentleman, a friend of mine," answered the worthy captain; "otherwise I should not have wanted three horses."

"But how will you pass the gates?" inquired the other; "they are very strict at that side, for they fear enterprises from York."

"There's my key," replied Barecolt, producing the governor's pass; "but, for fear it should not fit the lock, Master O'Donnell, I shall try it five or six times before nightfall. What I mean is, that I will go out and in several times, that the people may know my face."

His companion gazed at the pass, and then at Captain Barecolt for several moments, wondering not a little what might be the real character of his visitor, and what were the means by which he had contrived to obtain the document which he spread before him. There it was, however, not to be doubted—a genuine order under Sir John Hotham's own hand, for the sentries, guards, warders, and officers of all kinds of the town of Hull, to give free passage, at any hour between daybreak and nightfall, to Captain François Jersval, and the workmen employed by him to inspect and repair the fortifications of the city, and to offer him no let or hindrance, but rather afford him every aid and assistance.

"And now, Master O'Donnell," continued Barecolt, observing with a certain degree of pride that he had succeeded in puzzling his companion, "let us speak about the price of these horses."

"That I cannot tell till I buy them," replied O'Donnell, "but I shall see you to-night at the 'Swan,' and we can settle that matter then."

"Perhaps I shall be out," answered Barecolt, recollecting his engagement with Hazard and Falgate.

"Well, then, I will wait till you return," replied O'Donnell; "but in the meantime I must get the horses out before the gates close to-night. To what price would you like to go for the two?"

"I said three, Master O'Donnell," exclaimed Barecolt; "pray, do not be short of the number."

"No, no," replied the other; "there shall be three; but I will pay for the young lady's horse. I have money in hand that should have gone to poor old Neil; but when I wrote about it he did not answer."

"Dead men seldom do," said Barecolt; "but as to the price—there is no use of buying anything very beautiful for me. My own chargers are of the finest breed in Europe, between a Turkish courser and a powerful Norman mare; but as I don't want these horses that I now bespeak for battle, all that is needful will be to see that they be good strong beasts, willing to work for a day or two. But one thing that is to be remembered, Mr. O'Donnell, is, that if you do come up to the 'Swan' seeking me, you are only to know me as 'de Capitaine Jersval, one French officier, who be come to help de gouverneur to put de fortification in de repair.'"

"And pray, sir, what is your real name?" asked O'Donnell, with an air of simplicity.

"What is Arrah Neil's?" rejoined Barecolt; and, both laughing, they separated for the time, without affording each other any further information.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Poor Arrah Neil had passed an anxious and uneasy day, for, though the knowledge that she had a friend so near, ready to aid her in her escape, had proved no slight consolation, and though hope, of course, magnified Captain Barecolt's powers, and elevated his qualities far beyond their real extent, yet suspense is always full of terrors, and Fear usually treads

close upon the steps of Hope. Ezekiel Dry had also suffered all those blessed results which intemperance is sure to entail; and, having lain in his bed for several hours after the whole town was up and stirring, with sick stomach and aching head, he rose, declaring that something he had eaten at dinner had disagreed with him, and that he must have a small portion of strong waters to promote digestion. He was as morose, too, through the whole day, as a sick tiger, and would not stir beyond the doors till after he had dined. He was angry with the maid, rude to the landlady, assuring her that she was "a vessel of wrath;" and, above all, irritable and even fierce with Arrah Neil.

Though it is probable that he had no cause of any kind for suspicion, yet his mind was in that state of sullen discontent from bodily suffering that gives rise to incessant jealousy. He prowled about the door of her room; sent for her twice down to the little parlour between breakfast and dinner; looked out whenever he heard a door open; and twice stopped Mrs. White when she was going up-stairs, upon the pretence of asking some question. The last time this occurred, his inquiry once more was after Mr. Hugh O'Donnell.

"Really, sir, I have not been able to hear," replied Mrs. White; "but I daresay the governor, Sir John, could tell you."

"That will not do, woman," replied Mr. Dry pettishly: "I only seek to hold communion with the godly of the land. How can I tell that Sir John Hotham is any better than an uncircumcised Philistine? Though he have taken a part with the righteous in behalf of this poor country, peradventure it may be but with an eye to the spoil."

"Goodness, sir! think of what you are saying in Hull!" exclaimed Mrs. White, giving a glance to some of the bystanders; "you may get yourself into trouble if you speak so of the governor."

"Nay, woman; am I not called to lift up my voice and spare not?" rejoined Mr. Dry. "Is this a time for showing a respect to persons? Verily, I will take up a word against them."

"Well, then, I am sure I will not stay to hear it," replied the landlady; and away she went, leaving Mr. Dry to finish his exhortation to the maid, the ostler, and two townsmen, if he chose.

Shortly after, however, the dinner of the guest was served up to him, and gradually, under its influence, he was restored to a more placable state of mind, having sought the aid of sundry somewhat potent libations, which he termed supporting the inner man, but which Mrs. White denominated taking "a hair of the dog that had bit him."

As soon as he had satisfied both hunger and thirst, Mr. Dry took Arrah Neil back to her chamber again, and having locked the door, and sought his hat and cloak in his own room, he walked slowly down the stairs, resolved to pursue his perquisitions for Mr. Hugh O'Donnell in person; but, before he reached the door of the "Swan," his tranquillity was much overset by the entrance of a bold, swaggering, joyous-looking person, whose very cheerfulness of face was offensive in the sight of the sour and sober Mr. Dry. He looked at him, then, with a glance of amazement and reprobation, and then, while our good friend Diggory Falgate brushed past, raised his eyes towards heaven, as if inquiring whether such things as a blithe heart and cheerful countenance could be tolerated on earth.

Falgate immediately caught the look, and, as it unfortunately happened for Mr. Dry, recollected in him a personage whom he had seen in no very respectable plight in the streets of Hull the night before. He instantly paused, then, and, bursting into a laugh, began to sing the well-known old words—older than they are generally supposed to be—

> My wife Joan's a Presbyterian;
> She won't swear, but she will lie,
> I to the ale-house, she to the tavern;
> She'll get drunk as well as I;

and, ending with another laugh, he walked on to Mrs. White's little room.

The wrath of Mr. Dry of Longsoaken was overpowering; but it could not find vent in words, and after once more lifting up his eyes, and his hands also, he hurried out of the house, resolved that, if he stayed beyond the following day in Hull, he would quit an inn where such godless people were permitted to pass the door.

We will not pursue him on his track through the town, but return to poor Arrah Neil, whose day, as we have said, had passed in anxiety and pain; and who now sat with her hand beating time upon the table to some fancied tune, as the sun sank lower and lower, and the hues of evening began to spread over the sky.

As she thus sat, she saw Mr. Dry walk away from the door, cross over the street, and enter a house opposite. He turned before he went in, and looked up at the windows of the "Swan," but Arrah Neil was in one of those meditative moods when the spirit seems to be separate from the body, or scarcely conscious of a connection between the two. She saw the man she so much hated and despised gaze up to where she was sitting; but in thinking of him and his baseness, of the power he had obtained over her, of his perseverance in maintaining that power, of how she could escape from him, and whither he could now be going, she seemed to forget altogether that it was upon her his eyes were turned, and, without moving her place, she remained watching him as if he were a mere piece of mechanism, whose springs and whose wheels were worthy of observation, but incapable of observation in return.

It was the best course she could have pursued, though she did so unconsciously; for, after Mr. Dry had been a minute or two in the house which he entered, he came out again, and, seeing her still sitting there immoveable, with her eyes

fixed upon the same spot, he muttered, "The girl is a fool, that's clear!" and went on about his business.

Other eyes had been watching him as well as those of Arrah Neil, and before he had actually quitted the street the step of Mrs. White was heard upon the stairs. But ere the good landlady could reach the top, the voice of Nancy from below exclaimed, "Here's a gentleman, ma'am, wants to speak to you!"

Arrah waited for a moment or two, in the hope that the new guest would depart, and that the hostess would pay her her accustomed visit; for, in those moments of anxious expectation and suspense, she felt the presence of any sympathizing human creature a benefit and a relief. But after a while she turned to gaze from the window again, and murmured—for she did not sing—some lines of an old song which she had learned in her infancy. As she thus sat, she heard another step upon the stairs, slower and more heavy than that of the landlady, and, without giving it a second thought, she returned to sport with her own fancies, when a key was put into the lock, and the door opened.

Arrah Neil started and turned round, and not a little was her surprise to see a tall, powerful, elderly man, with white hair, and deep blue eyes, the lashes of which, as well as the eyebrows, were still black, enter her chamber, fasten the door behind him, and advance towards her. She was a little frightened, and would have been more so, but there was a kindly and gentle air in the visitor's countenance which was not calculated to produce alarm; and as he came nearer, he said, "I beg your pardon, young lady, but I much wished to see you. I have not seen you for many a long year, not since you were quite a little thing."

"Then you knew me in my childhood, sir?" exclaimed Arrah eagerly; "and—"

"You may well say that, lady," replied Hugh O'Donnell, before she could proceed. "These arms were the first that received you when you set foot upon this shore. Oh, a sorrowful landing it was, and sorrowful was the fate that followed, and sorrowful were the days that went before; and there has been little but sorrow since. But good luck to-morrow, it may bring something brighter, and the sky won't be overcast for ever, that's impossible."

"Then you are the Mr. O'Donnell of whom Mrs. White has told me," said Arrah. "Oh, sir, I beseech you, tell me more about myself and my kindred! Whosoever's child I am, let me know it. If a peasant's, say so without fear. I would rather cast away the vain but bright dreams that have haunted me so long, and fix my best affections on the memory of some good plain people, than have this wild doubt and uncertainty any longer. Tell me—tell me anything, if it be not disgraceful to the living or the dead."

"Disgraceful!" cried Hugh O'Donnell; "I should like to hear any man say that! No, no; there's nothing disgraceful, my darling; but I cannot and I must not tell you all that I could wish, young lady—not just at present, that is to say. By and by you will hear all."

"And in the meantime what misfortunes may befall me!" said Arrah Neil in an earnest tone; "what misfortunes have already befallen me, which perhaps might have been averted!"

"Why, that is true too," replied O'Donnell, after a moment's thought; "and yet it could not be helped. What to do now I cannot rightly tell; for, from what the good woman below says, old Neil, when he was dying, wished you to know all."

"I am sure he did," answered the poor girl; "but they had swept the cottage of everything, and I much fear that the papers he wished me to have fell into the hands of this old man."

"Ay, you must be got out of his clutches; that's the first thing," said O'Donnell. "On my life! if there were anything like law in the land, we would make him prove before the justices what right he has to meddle with you. His ward indeed! But, alas, young lady! there is neither law nor justice left in England, and the simple word of that crop-eared knave would weigh down a host of what they call malignants. The only way to follow is, for you to get away secretly, and put yourself under the care of those who have already been kind to you. You are very willing to go back to Lord Walton and his sister, I suppose?"

"Oh, that I am!" exclaimed Arrah Neil, with the warm colour mounting in her fair cheek; but the next moment she cast her eyes thoughtfully down, and murmured, "And yet, and yet—"

"Yet what, young lady?" asked O'Donnell, seeing that she did not conclude the sentence.

"Nothing," replied Arrah Neil: "'tis but a vain regret. When I was in poverty and beggary they were generous and kind to me; and at times when I schooled myself to think that such must have been my original situation, notwithstanding the idle dreams of brighter days that came back to trouble me, I used to fancy that I could be well content to be their lowest servant, so that I might follow and be with them always. But since I came hither, and the memories of the past grew clear, and the mistress of this house confirmed them, I have been thinking that, perhaps, before I returned to those two kind and noble friends, I might learn all my own fate and history, and be able to tell them that, when they condescended to notice and protect a being so lowly and humble as I was when they found me, they were unknowingly showing a kindness to one not so far inferior in blood to themselves as they imagined."

"And, by the Lord, you shall be able to tell them so!" replied O'Donnell; "for, proud as they may be, I can tell them—"

"Oh no!" said Arrah, interrupting him; "they are not proud; neither was it from any pride that I wished to tell them that poor Arrah Neil was not the lowly being they had thought; for they were so gentle and so kind, that de-

pendence on them was sweet; but I wished them to understand how it was and why that I have been so strange and wild at times—so thoughtful. And yet there may have been pride," she added, after a moment's pause, fixing her eyes upon the ground, and speaking as if to herself. "I would not have him think me so low, so very low. But you said I should be able to tell them. Speak, speak! let me hear what it is."

"Well, then," replied Hugh O'Donnell, "you may tell them there is—"

But ere he could go on, Mrs. White ran into the room, exclaiming, "He is coming! he is coming! Nancy sees him at the end of the street. Quick, quick, Master O'Donnell!"

"Oh, speak, speak!" cried Arrah.

"I will see you again, dear lady," cried O'Donnell quickly; "I will come with the horses myself. But in the meantime this money belongs to you; it may be needful; it may be serviceable; do not let him see it;" and, laying a small leathern purse on the table, he hurried towards the door. Before he quitted the room, however, he turned, and, seeing the poor girl's beautiful eyes filled with tears, he added, "Do not be afraid; I will see you again before this time to-morrow."

The landlady of the "Swan" and her visitor hurried down to the little parlour, but, as so often happens when people are taken by surprise, they made more haste than was necessary; for, whether Mr. Dry of Longsoaken met with something to detain him, or whether he walked slowly as he came down the street, he did not make his appearance on the steps leading up to the inn for several minutes after they had descended.

"I will speak with this man, Mistress White," said O'Donnell, after a moment's thought. "Tell him that I have come to see him, that you sent for me by some one who knew where to find me."

"Are you sure that is a good plan?" asked the landlady. "We want time to get the young lady away."

"Never fear! never fear!" replied her companion. "I will keep him in play for a week, if need be."

"Well, well," said Mrs. White. And while O'Donnell took a seat and leaned his cheek upon his arm, as if waiting patiently for some one's coming, the good landlady bustled about, making a noise amongst bottles and measures, with as unconcerned an air as she could assume.

The next minute Mr. Dry walked solemnly up the four steps which led from the street to a little flat landing-place of stone, encircled with an iron railing, which lay without the door; and as soon as he thus became apparent, Mrs. White ran out of her parlour, exclaiming, "Sir, sir! the gentleman you wished to see is come. The man who brings the eggs called a few minutes ago, and, as he knew where to find him, I bade him tell Mr. O'Donnell to come and see you."

"That was right! that was right!" cried Mr. Dry, his small red eyes sparkling with satisfaction. "Where is he, Mrs. White?"

"Here, sir, in the bar," answered the landlady. And with a slow and solemn step, calculating how he was to proceed, and smoothing his face down to his usual gravity, Mr. Dry walked deliberately into the little room where Hugh O'Donnell was seated.

"Here is Master Dry, sir," said the hostess, opening the door for him; but Mr. Dry waved his hand pompously for silence, and then considered Mr. O'Donnell attentively.

"This good lady tells me you wish to speak with me, sir," said O'Donnell, after giving the new-comer quite sufficient time to inspect his countenance. "Pray, what may be your business with me?"

"It is of a private nature, Master O'Donnell," replied Mr. Dry; "and may perhaps be better explained at your own house than here, if you will tell me where that is."

O'Donnell smiled and shook his head. "I am not fond of private business at my own house, sir," he answered drily. "These are suspicious times; people will be for calling me a malignant or something of that kind. I am a plain man, sir,—an honest, open merchant,—and not fond of secrets. If you have anything to say, I can hear it here."

"Well, then, come into this neighbouring room, my good friend," replied Dry; "to that you can have no objection. And as to being charged with malignancy, methinks the conversation of Ezekiel Dry of Longsoaken would never bring such an accusation upon any man's head."

"I beg your pardon, sir; I did not know you," replied O'Donnell, following towards the little room where Mr. Dry had dined after his first arrival. "I have heard of you from the people of Bishop's Merton, whom I occasionally supply with dry beef and neats' tongue from Hamburgh."

"Pray be seated, Master O'Donnell," said Mr. Dry, closing the door carefully after they had entered; and then, taking a chair opposite to his companion, he went on to speak as follows, interrupting his discourse with sundry hems and haws, which gave him time both to think of what he was next to say and to examine the countenance of O'Donnell as he proceeded.

"You must know, Mr. O'Donnell," he said, "that after the death of a certain old man—a clear and undoubted malignant—named Sergeant Neil—hum!—with whom I think you have had a good deal to do—ha!"

"Very little, sir," replied O'Donnell, as he paused. "I had to pay him some money every year sent to me by my correspondents beyond sea. I should think the man was somewhat of a malignant from some of his letters on the receipt."

"Verily was he, and a most ferocious one too," replied Mr. Dry. "But after the death

of this person, I, with the consent and appointment of the authorities,—hum!—took upon me the care and protection of the girl supposed to be his grand-daughter — hum! — his grand-daughter, as she was called—I say, Master O'Donnell—ha!"

"Very kind of you indeed, sir," answered O'Donnell; "especially as old Neil could not die rich."

"As poor as a rat," replied Mr. Dry emphatically. "Pray what was it you paid him per annum, Master O'Donnell?"

"About fifty pounds a year, as far as I recollect," said O'Donnell; "but I cannot tell till I look in my books."

"That was but a small sum," rejoined Dry, "for taking care of this girl, when her family are so wealthy and the estates so great—ha!"

"Are they, sir?" asked O'Donnell in an indifferent tone. "Pray, whereabouts do they lie?"

"Come, come, Master O'Donnell," said Mr. Dry, with a significant nod; "you know more than you pretend to know—hum! We have found letters and papers—hum!—which show that you have full information—ha!—and it is necessary that you should speak openly with me—hum! Do you understand me?—ha!"

"Oh, I understand quite well, sir," replied O'Donnell, not in the least discomposed: "my letters were all upon business. I sent the money—I announced the sending—I asked for my receipts; and whenever there was a word or two sent over for us to forward, such as, 'All is well,' 'Things going on better,' or anything of that sort, I wrote them down just as I received them, without troubling my head about what they referred to."

Mr. Dry was somewhat puzzled how to proceed —whether to take the high and domineering tone that he had often found very successful at Bishop's Merton, or to cajole and bribe, as he had had occasion to do at other times; but, after a little reflection, he determined that the latter would be the best course at first, as he could always have recourse to the former, which, if employed too soon and without due caution, might lead to more publicity than was at all desirable.

"Now listen to me, Master O'Donnell," he said at length: "you are a wise man and prudent, not to confide your secrets to strangers; but it is of vast importance that the true rank, station, fortune, family, and connections of this young woman should be clearly ascertained; and though, perhaps, you may not like to say at once, 'I know this,' or 'I know that,' yet I ask you, can you not secretly and quietly get me information upon all these matters, if I make it worth your while to take the trouble—well worth your while—very well worth your while?"

"That is another matter," answered O'Donnell,—"quite another matter, sir; but the question is, what would make it worth my while? I'm a merchant, sir; and we must make it a matter of trade."

Mr. Dry pondered; but, before he could answer, Mr. O'Donnell added, "Come, Master Dry; let me hear distinctly what it is you want to know, and then I can better judge how much it is worth."

"That I will tell you immediately," rejoined Mr. Dry, feeling in his pocket; and at length, drawing forth the bundle of papers which Captain Barecolt had examined the night before, he began to read. 'Habakkuk ii. 5. Yea, also, because he transgresseth by wine'—no, that is not it; and, besides, it was not wine but strong waters. Ah, here it is!" and he proceeded to address to his companion the series of questions which the worthy captain above-named had warned Mr. O'Donnell would be propounded to him.

"A goodly list!" said the Irishman in a tone that Mr. Dry did not think very promising; but he went on immediately to add, "Well, I think all this information I could obtain if it were made worth my while, and a great deal more too; but you see, Mr. Dry, this is purely a mercantile transaction; you come to me for information as for goods."

"Certainly, certainly," replied he of Longsoaken; "it is all a matter of trade."

"Well, then," continued O'Donnell, "I must know to what market you intend to take the goods."

"I do not understand," said Mr. Dry.

"I'll explain it to you in a moment," replied the other; "I mean, what is your object? If it should be shown that the girl is different from what she seems,—if fair and probable prospects of money and such good things should spring up,—what do you intend to do with her?"

"That is a question I have not yet considered with due deliberation and counsel," replied Mr. Dry.

"But it is one well worth consideration," answered his companion. "In a word, Master Dry, do you intend to put the girl and her property under the protection, as it is called, of the law, or to give her another protector—your son, or yourself perhaps?"

"What if I say to put her under the protection of the law?"

"Then I say you're a great goose for your pains," replied O'Donnell, rising; "and I'm afraid we can't deal. The law is a bad paymaster, and does not make it worth men's while to do it service or take trouble for it, and this would cost me a great deal of pains and work. Now, if you had made up your mind to marry her quietly and secretly to your son, or any near relation, it would be a different affair, and you would not mind giving a good percentage."

"I have no son—I have no relations," replied Dry somewhat pettishly; "but I shall not mind giving a good percentage notwithstanding."

"Then of course you intend to marry her yourself," said O'Donnell. "Well, that being the case, I will go home and consider between this and this hour to-morrow what I will take. I must make my calculations, for I am a man of

my word, and like to know exactly what a thing is worth before I put a price upon it; but by this time to-morrow I will tell you; so good-morning, Mr. Dry; it is getting late."

"But where shall I find you—where shall I find you?" asked Mr. Dry, as the other moved towards the door.

"Oh, Mrs. White will send a boy for you," replied O'Donnell; "she knows where it is now. Good-afternoon;" and, issuing forth, he spoke a word or two to the landlady, and then quitted the house, murmuring, "The old snake! I know them, those canting vipers—I know them!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

It was ten o'clock at night; the town was dark and silent, the streets empty, and the windows generally closed, when Diggory Falgate advanced with a light, gay step through various narrow ways towards the blockhouse where the Earl of Beverley was confined. He was followed at the distance of about a hundred yards by Ancient Hazard of the train-bands, and a short distance behind him came Captain Barecolt, with the silent step but wide stride of one well accustomed to dangerous enterprises.

The foremost of the party, we have said, advanced lightly and gaily, with that sort of braggadocio air which characterized the Cavaliers in almost all their undertakings, and which, or rather the foolish self-confidence of which it was the mere outward expression, ruined so many of their best concerted plans. Ancient Hazard, however, as he walked along, displayed a very different aspect. He was somewhat afraid of the business in hand; and, though resolved to carry it through, his head turned almost involuntarily to the right or left at every step, thinking that some one must be watching him, though the only suspicions that existed anywhere regarding his conduct were those in his own heart. Barecolt, on the contrary, though as likely as any man, from natural disposition, to make as much noise about whatever he did as was necessary, was too much habituated to enterprises of this kind to be particularly excited on the occasion, and his vanity took the direction of affecting to look upon it as a matter of course, so commonplace and easy that it allowed him to think of anything else; and he therefore followed with his eyes bent upon the ground, noticing, apparently, nothing that passed around him.

The first, and indeed only, obstruction that presented itself to their progress towards the blockhouse was offered by the watch, who, encountering good Diggory Falgate, carrying, it must be remarked, a small bundle under his arm, and not particularly approving of the jaunty air with which he gave them good-night, thought fit to stop him, and, in Shakespeare's words, "prate of his whereabout."

Falgate was always ready to cry clubs, and strongly disposed to resist the watch when it could be done with the slightest probability of success; so that a very pretty quarrel was commencing, which might soon have conveyed him to prison, or the cage, had not Hazard come to his support, and informed the worthy guardians of the night that the captive in their hands was his poor neighbour, Falgate the painter, who was not an ill-disposed man, though somewhat inclined to moisten his clay with more than a sufficient quantity of strong beer; and he moreover hinted that such might be the case on that very night.

This assurance proved so far satisfactory that the watch thought fit to let him go with a suitable admonition, and Hazard, acting his part better when he grew warm in the matter, bade Diggory, in a rough tone, go on about his business, and not make broils in the streets, or he would get himself into mischief.

This said, the whole party proceeded on their way, resuming as soon as possible the same order of march as before, Captain Barecolt, with his grave and serious demeanour, passing the watch without question.

About five minutes after, Diggory emerged into the open space by the river side, and, advancing straight towards the blockhouse, entered into conversation with the guard. What was said at first was in a low tone, but presently the sound of the voices grew louder and louder; angry words reached the corner of the street behind which Ancient Hazard had concealed himself; and, running across, he came up just in time to prevent the sentinel from knocking down the painter with the butt-end of his piece.

The plan agreed upon was now fully carried out; the ancient of the train-bands, while threatening Falgate sharply with the stocks and the prison, was still more severe upon the sentinel, and commanded him immediately to march back to the guard-house and send down the next man upon the roll. He would keep guard while the other was gone, he said, and the man, giving up his musket, walked away, proceeding about fifty yards towards the opposite buildings before he recollected the orders of the governor, to keep all persons at a distance from the spot where he was in conference with the prisoner. He accordingly paused, and Hazard, who had been watching him closely, walked up, asking why he stopped when he had orders to go straight to the guard-house. The man excused himself, and transmitted the commands he had received from the governor, upon which his ancient desired him to go on, returning slowly towards the blockhouse.

By this time, however, Barecolt had run across in the darkness from the mouth of the opposite street, and, with Falgate behind him, was groping over the door for the key which he had seen in the lock on the preceding morning. He found the keyhole, however, untenanted, and at that moment the exclamation burst from his lips which had so much alarmed Sir John Hotham.

"They have taken the key out!" he cried; "curse me if I don't force the lock off with my dagger!" and he was proceeding to act accordingly, when, to his surprise, the door was opened, the light broke forth from within, and Lord Beverley suddenly clapped his hand upon his mouth, whispering, "Not a word of recognition!" Then, in a louder tone, he demanded, "Whom and what do you seek here, sir?"

Barecolt for a single instant was puzzled as to whether he should speak French or English; but Lord Beverley had used nothing but the latter tongue, and he replied in the same, while with open eyes he seemed to demand further explanation, "I was seeking some one whom it seems I am not likely to find."

"You may look in, sir; you will see no one here," answered the earl; and Barecolt gave a hurried look around, saw the curtain of the bed on the opposite side drawn forward, and, with a wink of the eye, gave the royal officer to understand that he began to comprehend.

"That is enough," continued the earl, assuming somewhat suddenly a foreign accent; "you are now satisfied; go away."

Barecolt instantly withdrew a step; but the earl followed him, and added in a whisper, "You seem at liberty—I shall be so soon—out of the town as fast as you can, and either wait for me on the road to York, as near as is safe, or tell the king all that has happened, and that I will rejoin him speedily, I trust, with good news."

Thus saying, he drew back, shut the door, and locked it as before in the inside.

Captain Barecolt laid his finger on the side of his nose. "Here is something going on here," he said to himself. "Well, I will obey orders: it is not my fault if his lordship will not get out of the mousetrap. Now, Master Falgate, now, Master Hazard, let us be off as fast as we can to the Swan."

"I must stay here till the guard comes," answered Hazard in a low tone. "Why, what is all this? The sentry said something about the governor. Will not the prisoner come out?"

"No," replied Barecolt; "he would rather stay in: nevertheless, as he is a wise man, Master Hazard, doubtless he has his reasons. Well, follow us to the 'Swan' as quickly as you can, and we will talk more."

'I will—I will," answered Hazard; "away with you, quick! if any one were to come and find you here with me, I were ruined."

Barecolt and Falgate hurried on, and in about five minutes reached the "Swan," the door of which was partly shut; but the moment they approached, the servant-girl, Nancy, put forth her head, saying, "Go up to your room, sir, quick; the old man is below—Dame White told me to say so."

"Thanks, Nancy!" replied Barecolt; and, contriving to conceal his face with his cloak, he crossed the passage, and, followed by Falgate, walked up the stairs. In the room of the worthy captain they found a light burning, and Falgate, laying down his bundle upon the table, asked, "Well, sir, what is the matter? Where does the pulley hitch? When men have the door open, why won't they walk out?"

"Good faith! I cannot tell, any more than I can what is in that bundle," observed Barecolt.

"That you shall soon be able to tell," replied Falgate. "It is all my worldly goods and chattels, sir. I am going with you to join the king."

"A good resolution," answered Barecolt abruptly. "Pray, Master Falgate, have you money to buy a horse? A man is nothing without a horse, you know."

"Ay, that I have," replied the painter; "but where to get one is the question."

"Let not that embarrass you," rejoined Barecolt with a well-satisfied and patronizing air. "A man of action and experience like myself is never unprovided. I will find you one between this and Newlands."

Falgate admired with such evident admiration, that Barecolt treated him to a story of his adventures once in the Carpathian Mountains, where the safety of himself and his whole company was secured by his having taken the precaution to put a thimble in his pocket. Before this was concluded they were joined by Hazard, whose watch had passed undisturbed till he was relieved by another of the train-bands; and the three remained near an hour together, and partook of some of the landlady's good wine. Hazard then issued forth, and consultations manifold took place between Mrs. White and Barecolt, after which the good lady paid a furtive visit to poor Arrah Neil; for by this time Master Dry of Longsoaken had retired to rest. There were then further conferences in the room of Barecolt, and at length the inn sank into repose.

About half an hour before daybreak, however, four persons silently assembled in the hall. Few words were spoken; but good Mrs. White, with a tear in her eye at the thoughts of other days, kissed the cheek of the fair girl, who leaned trembling on the arm of Barecolt. The door was quietly unbolted and opened; three of the party went out, and the fourth, retiring, closed it after them. The others walked slowly on towards the gate of the town, and, just as they approached, the faint dawn of day began to give light to the streets.

"Give the young lady your arm, Master Painter," said Barecolt, "and answer, to whatever I say to you, that you will set about it whenever you have seen the young woman to Newlands."

Falgate, who was now in his working dress, nodded his head, and gave his arm for Arrah's support, while Barecolt advanced to the gate, and, giving the word with which he had been furnished, ordered the wicket to be opened in an authoritative tone. It had not the full success he could have wished, however; for the man would do nothing further than call his officer, so that some five minutes were lost.

At length, however, the officer appeared, and, as he had seen our worthy captain on the day before, and examined his pass, no further difficulties were made in his case. In regard to Falgate, however, the matter was different, and he was asked, in a surly and somewhat suspicious tone, whither he was going so early in the morning.

"He be coming vid me to see one ting dere be to do at the nort end of de curtain," said Barecolt; "but all you English have too much to do vid de girl, and he say he cannot do it till he be come back from Newlands; but you remember, sair," he added, turning to Falgate, "if I find you not about it by seven of de clock, I turn you off."

"I will set about it, sir, as soon as I have seen the young woman to Newlands," replied Falgate, bobbing his head; and the whole party passed out of the gates, which were closed behind them.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Now go on, and wait for me at the first little public-house you come to," whispered Captain Barecolt, as soon as he and his companions had passed the gates of Hull. "I will not be a minute;" and, turning away underneath the wall which surrounded the city, he appeared with a shrewd eye to be examining the fortifications. Lucky it was for him that he did so; for, the moment after, the officer of the guard, having been roused somewhat early from his slumber, and thinking it unnecessary to go to bed again, sauntered forth to enjoy the breeze of the morning, and to observe what the strange captain was about. No sooner did our worthy friend, giving a backward glance towards the gates, perceive that he was watched, than, without a moment's deliberation, he beckoned the officer up to him, and addressed him when he approached with a torrent of engineering terms, some in French, some in English, some in a language compounded of the two.

"Begar!" he cried, after having vented a great deal of learning upon the incomprehensive ears of his auditor; "I not able to tell vat de gouverneur vill have do here. Look, sair; look, my good friend: if I be not much mistake, dat hill dere, not above one half mile off, command de bastion all along. Let me beseech you, have de bounty to take von leetle valk up to de top of de hill. Den vid von stick making a level—so; see if de line do not cover de top of de curtain—*c'est à dire*, if it do not *dominé* it. You understand?"

"Oh yes; I understand quite well," replied the officer of the train-bands; "but I'll tell you what, captain: you must go yourself, for I cannot leave the guard."

"*Sapristi!* dat be true," said Barecolt, turning away and walking towards the slight elevation he had pointed out. The officer of the guard watched him for a moment, as with his usual dignified stride he walked on towards the hill, and then, turning back again to the gates, entered, causing them once more to be closed behind him.

Barecolt paused when he reached the top of the rise, and, turning round, examined the town of Hull, but more especially the gate from which he had issued forth, making sundry gesticulations as if he were endeavouring to ascertain the relative heights of the hill and the fortifications, suspecting that some one might be observing him still. In doing so, however, he scanned every nook and corner with a curious eye; and, having satisfied himself that he was not watched, he turned sharply to the left, regained the road along which Falgate and Arrah Neil had taken their way, and, covered by a small clump of trees which grew near at that time, he hurried on with long steps towards the little public-house which Hugh O'Donnell had mentioned.

The pace at which he went was so rapid that, notwithstanding the interruption he had met with, he came in sight of the little solitary house just at the moment that Arrah Neil and her companion reached it. There was a tall man standing at the door; and the next instant, before Captain Barecolt came up, three horses were led out by a man and a boy, and the worthy captain could see his Irish acquaintance, Mr. O'Donnell, lift the fair girl upon one of the beasts, and then, approaching his head close to her ear, appear to whisper to her eagerly for several minutes.

Whatever was the nature of his communication, it was just over when Captain Barecolt laid his hand upon the Irishman's shoulder; and Mr. O'Donnell only added the words, "Remember, to none but himself or her."

He then turned to Captain Barecolt, exclaiming, "Quick, quick! upon your horse's back, and away!"

"Oh, there's no such haste, Master O'Donnell!" replied Barecolt, who loved not to receive the word of command from a merchant. "Nothing but cowardice is ever in a hurry; so, what is to pay for the horses, my friend?"

"Seventeen pounds for that," replied O'Donnell, pointing to one; "and two-and-twenty pounds for the other, which you had better mount yourself, lest your long legs touch the ground. They are cheap."

"Cheap or dear, they must be paid for," replied Barecolt; "and they don't seem bad beasts either. Come, Master Falgate, bring forth the crowns; you see, having short legs saves you five pounds." And while the worthy painter unfolded his bundle, in which, besides his own apparel, were now contained such parts of Barecolt's goods and chattels as he thought it absolutely necessary to take with him, the captain drew forth a leathern purse and disbursed the sum required for his own beast, which operation, to say the truth, left his pocket but scantily garnished.

"Now, mount, mount, Master Falgate!" continued Barecolt. "T'other side of your horse, man, and t'other foot in the stirrup, or we shall have you with your face to the tail. Now, Mistress Arrah, are you ready?"

But when he turned to look at her, Arrah Neil had fallen into one of her deep fits of abstraction, and he had to repeat the question before she roused herself.

"Yes, yes," she answered, with a start, "I am ready;" and then, turning to O'Donnell, added, "I remember it all now. That name, like the sudden drawing of a curtain, has let in the light upon memory, and I see the past."

"God speed you, young lady!" replied O'Donnell. "But now hasten upon your way, and I will take mine; for it will not be long ere your flight is discovered, and before that I hope I shall be in my house, and you many miles hence."

Thus saying, he waved his hand, and Barecolt, striking his horse with his heel, led the way along the road at a quick pace. Arrah Neil followed, and was at his side in a moment; but good Diggory Falgate, who seemed less accustomed to equestrian exercise than either of his companions, was not a little inconvenienced by the trotting of his horse. Merciless Captain Barecolt, however, though, to tell the truth, he saw the difficulty with which their companion followed them at a still increasing distance, kept up the same rapid rate of progression for some six or seven miles, speaking now and then a word to his fair companion, but showing, upon the whole, wonderful abstinence from his usual frailty. At length they reached the top of a long sloping hill, which commanded a view over a wide extent of country behind them, and along at least one-half of the road they had followed from Hull; and, turning his horse for a moment or two, Captain Barecolt paused and examined the track beneath his eyes, to see if he could discover any signs of pursuit. All was clear, however. The sun, now risen a degree or two above the horizon, but still red and large from the horizontal mist through which it shone, cast long shadows from tree, and house, and village spire over the ground in some places, and in others bright gleams of rosy light; but almost all the world seemed still slumbering, for no moving object was to be seen on the road, and nothing even in the fields around, but where a team of horses, driven slowly by a whistling ploughman, at about a hundred yards upon the left of the party on the hill, wended slowly onward to commence their labours for the day.

"You may go a little slower now, young lady," said Barecolt after he had concluded his examination: "we have a good start of them, and I do not think they would venture to send out far in pursuit."

"Thank God!" answered Arrah Neil, not in the common tone of satisfaction with which those words are usually pronounced, but with the voice of heartfelt gratitude to Him from whom all deliverance comes. "But do you think we are really safe?" continued Arrah, after a moment's thought. "Perhaps it would be better to go on quickly for a time; but that good man who came with us seems hardly able to make his horse keep up with us."

"Then we will make him lead as soon as he comes up," answered Barecolt; "we can follow at his pace, for I think we are secure enough just now. The truth is, he is evidently unaccustomed to a horse's back, and sits his beast like a London tapster in a city pageant. 'Tis a lamentable thing, Mistress Arrah, that so few people in this country ever learn to ride. Now, before I was twelve years old, there was not a *pas* of the *manége* that I could not make the wildest horse perform; and serviceable indeed have I found it in my day, for I remember well when the small town of Alais was taken, which I had aided to defend, with twenty other gentleman of different nations, we determined that we would have nothing to do with the capitulation; and on the morning when the king's troops were just about to march into the town, we issued forth to cut our way out, or to find it through them in some manner. We had not gone above three hundred yards from the gate when we found a line of pikemen drawn up across the road and in a meadow. There were no other troops on that side of the town, for the chief attack was at another point; but, as soon as they saw us, down went their pikes, when, crying, 'Now, gentlemen, follow me!' I dashed up to them as if to charge. I was mounted on a swift and powerful horse—I called him Drake, in memory of the great Sir Francis; but, just as I was at the point of their pikes, I lifted him on his haunches, struck my spurs into his flanks, and with one spring over the line we went."

"And what became of the rest?" asked Arrah Neil.

"You shall hear," replied Barecolt. "The horse as he came over lashed out behind, and, striking one of the pikemen on the head, dashed in his steel cap and his skull together, so that down he went; and my friends, charging on, cut a way for a part of themselves before the confusion was over. Five got through and joined me, but the rest had to eat cold steel."

"They were killed?" asked Arrah Neil. "Alas! war is a sad thing."

"Very true," replied Barecolt; "but one comes to think of it as nothing. It is the occupation of brave men and gentlemen; and when one makes up one's mind every day to lose one's life if need be, he does not think much of seeing others go a few hours before him. If I could call up again all the men I have seen killed, since I first smelt powder when I was about fifteen, I should have a pretty strong army of ghosts to fight the Roundheads with. Well, Master Falgate," he continued, as the painter came up, "you seem red in the face and out of breath."

"Ugh! there never was such a beast!" ex-

claimed Falgate. "It is like riding a rhinoceros. He has as many hard knobs on him as a cow, and his pace is like a galloping earthquake. Oons, captain! you go so fast, too!"

"Well, my good friend, tell me," said Barecolt, "did you ever take a journey on a horse before?"

"No," replied Falgate boldly, "else I do not think I should ever have got on one again. But in pity, good Captain Barecolt, don't go at such a rate, or, faith! you must leave me behind, which would not be like a good *camarado.*"

"No, no; we won't leave you behind, Falgate," replied Barecolt, "and for that reason we will make you go first. So shall we be ready to pick you up if you fall off; and you can go at your own pace, though it must be the quickest you can manage."

"Oh, butter and eggs for ever!" cried Falgate, putting himself in the van, and going on at a jog-trot; "if an old market-woman can keep her seat and not break her eggs, I do not see why one of the lords of the creation should tumble off and crack his bones."

"Nor I either," replied Barecolt; "and if he do, he deserves to break his head. But get on a little faster, Master Falgate, or we shall have the fat citizens of Hull at our heels."

"Oh, no fear, no fear!" rejoined Falgate; "they are all miraculous horsemen, and ride as well as I do; so, unless the governor pursue you in person, and bring all the horses out of his own stable, you may ride to York and back before any of them will stir. Would that the man who sold me this horse were in as sore a skin as he who bought it!" he continued, after a short pause; "I am sure he must have had an ill-will at my poor bones—plague light upon him!"

"Ah, no!" cried Arrah Neil. "He is a good and a kind man."

"He is a very close one," replied Barecolt; "for I know, young lady, I tried my best yesterday to worm out of him all the secrets that we wanted to know; but he held his mouth as tight shut as the shell of an oyster."

"He had a reason, doubtless," answered Arrah Neil, falling into thought again.

"Well, if he have told you all about it," rejoined Barecolt, assuming an indifferent air, "it does not matter. I have no curiosity. Only, when we wish to send despatches securely, we give a copy to two separate messengers; and if, as I understood him, you are to tell Lord Walton or the young lady, it might have been better to inform me too, as then I could have carried them the intelligence in case of us being separated and of my seeing them first."

"Perhaps it might have been better," said Arrah Neil; "but all promises are sacred things, and, methinks, more especially promises to the dead."

"Ay, that they are," answered Barecolt, who saw that he was not likely to learn from his fair companion what had been the substance of her conversation with O'Donnell. "Ay, that they are. I remember a very curious and entertaining story about that, which happened at the siege of a certain town when I was serving in the north. I will tell it to you as we go, it will serve to while away the time."

CAPTAIN BARECOLT'S STORY.

"There is a little town called Le Catelet, just upon the French frontier, which was besieged by the Spanish army, after the French had taken it and held it for about a year. The attack began in the winter, and a number of honourable gentlemen threw themselves into it, to aid in the defence as volunteers. Amongst the rest were two friends who had fought in a good many battles together. One was called the Viscount de Boulaye, and the other the Capitaine la Vacherie. Every day there were skirmishes and sallies, and one night, when they were sitting drinking and talking together, after a very murderous sortie, Capitaine la Vacherie said to his friend,—

"'How cold those poor fellows must be whom we left dead in the trenches to-day!'

"'Ay, that they must!' said Boulaye; 'and 'pon my life, La Vacherie, I am glad the place is so full that you and I have but one room and one bed between us, otherwise I know not how we should keep ourselves warm.'

"'Nor I either,' replied La Vacherie. 'Mind, Boulaye, if I am some day left in the trenches, you come and look for me, and bring me out of the cold wind.'

"He spoke laughing, and the viscount answered in the same way,—

"'That I will, La Vacherie! don't you be afraid.'

"Well, about a fortnight after, the Spaniards attempted to storm the place; but they were driven back after fighting for near an hour, and Boulaye and La Vacherie, with the regiment of Champagne, pursued them to their entrenchments. Boulaye got back safe and sound to the town, just as it was growing dark, and went to the governor's house, talked for an hour over the assault, and then returned to his room, and asked his servant if Capitaine la Vacherie had come back. The man answered No; and so Boulaye swore that he would be hanged if he would wait for his supper. When supper came and La Vacherie did not, the viscount began to think, 'I should not wonder if that poor devil, La Vacherie, had left his bones outside;' and after he had eaten two or three mouthfuls, and drunk a glass or two of wine, he sent the servant to the quarters of the regiment of Champagne, to see if he could hear anything of his friend. But the servant could find no one who knew anything of him; and when he came back, he found the viscount sitting with the table and the wine upon his right hand, and his feet upon the two andirons, with a warm fire of wood blazing away before him. When he told him that he could learn nothing, Boulaye exclaimed,—

"'*Sacrement!* I daresay he is dead: poor fellow, I am very sorry;' and he filled himself another glass of wine, and kept his feet on the

andirons. In about half an hour more he went to bed, and, just as he was getting comfortable and beginning to doze, seeing the fire flickering against the wall one minute and not seeing it the next, he heard a step upon the stairs, and instantly recollected La Vacherie's, who came up, singing and talking just as usual.

"'Ah,' cried he, 'La Vacherie, is that you? I thought you had been killed!'

"'The deuce you did, Boulaye!' replied La Vacherie; and he began to move about the bottles and glasses as if he were feeling for a candle to light it.

"'Well, don't make a noise, there's a good man,' said Boulaye; 'for I am tired, and have a good deal to do to-morrow.'

"'I'm sure so have I,' replied La Vacherie; 'so I will go to bed at once.'

"'Had you not better have some supper?' asked the viscount.

"'No,' replied his friend; 'I've had all the supper I want;' and accordingly he pulled off his clothes and lay down beside his comrade. But by that time the viscount was asleep, so that they had no further conversation that night. The next morning, when Viscount de Boulaye awoke, he found that La Vacherie had already risen, and left his nightcap upon the pillow, and he did not see him again till night, for the enemy made several fierce attacks, and all the troops of the garrison were busy till sunset. Well, he supped alone that night as before, and just as he got into bed he heard La Vacherie's step again, and again he came in, and again he would eat no supper, but went to bed as before. The viscount, however, did not sleep so easily this night, for he thought there was something odd about his friend. So, after lying for about half an hour, he said, 'La Vacherie, are you asleep?'

"'Not yet,' replied La Vacherie; 'but I shall soon be so.'

"'Well, I want to ask you something,' said Boulaye, turning himself sharp round, and as he did so his hand came against La Vacherie's. It was like a bit of ice!

"'Why, how cold you are!' cried the viscount.

"'And how can you expect me to be otherwise,' replied La Vacherie in a terrible voice, 'when you left me out there in the trenches through two long January nights?' and that moment he jumped out of bed, threw open the window, and went off. His body was found next morning where he had been killed two days before."

Arrah Neil was silent; but Falgate, who, while riding on at his slow pace, had kept one ear always open to his companion's story, turned round and asked, "But what became of the viscount?"

"Why, when the town capitulated," replied Barecolt, "he went into a Capuchin convent, and was called Father Henry. But hark! There is the sound of a trumpet, by the Lord Harry! Gallop, Falgate! gallop, or I'll drive my sword through you!" and at the same time he drew the weapon and pricked forward the horse of his companion with the point.

The Galloway, for it deserved no higher title, started on, lashing out behind in a manner that had nearly sent the poor painter out of the saddle and over its head; but when once the beast had fairly started in a gallop, Falgate found his seat much more comfortable than at a trot; and away the whole party went at full speed over hill and dale for about a mile and a half, when suddenly, to Barecolt's surprise, the sound of a trumpet was again heard upon his left, nearer than before. After pausing for a moment to listen, he made up his mind that whatever body of men were near, they did not come from the side of Hull; but, judging that when escorting treasure or a lady he should best show his valour by discretion, the renowned captain turned sharp off from the high road down a lane to his right, and after having gone rather more than one mile in that direction, through pleasant rows of trees, without hearing any more of the sounds which had alarmed him, he pulled up at a house, from the front of which a pole bearing a garland protruded over the road, indicating that some sort of entertainment would there be found for wayfaring travellers.

"We will here water our horses, Mistress Arrah," he said; "and, keeping in mind that we may not find loyal subjects in every house, we will refresh the inner man with gravity and moderation;" and, assuming a sad and sanctimonious air, he addressed a dry-looking man who presented himself, asking if they could obtain wherewithal to strengthen themselves for their further journey. A ready affirmative was given, and, aiding Arrah Neil from her horse, Barecolt led her in, and then, never forgetting his military habits, returned to see that the beasts were taken care of. The landlord followed him out, and the worthy captain continued to eye him with a considerate glance as he aided in washing the horses' mouths and taking out their bits. By the time this was accomplished, Barecolt's opinion of his companion was completely formed, and when the latter remarked, "You seem to have been riding very hard, master," he replied in a solemn tone, much to the astonishment of Diggory Falgate,—

"Yea, verily have we, for the sound of a trumpet met our ear, and we feared, being few in number, to fall in with a party of the swaggering malignants who we hear are riding through the country. Wilt thou get the horses a little corn, my friend?"

"Right willingly, master," replied the host; "I see thou art a godly man, and I am glad to serve thee."

The moment he was gone, Barecolt whispered to Falgate, who had remained silent, partly from fatigue and partly from surprise, "We must cozen the crop-eared knave. Whine, cant, and look devout, Master Falgate, and forget your swagger if you can."

"By St. Winifred!" replied Falgate; "this rough beast has taken all the swagger out of me. I can hardly stand, captain."

"Well, get thee in," replied Barecolt, "and leave me to deal with him. The best thing for thee to do is to hold thy tongue, for, if thou once openest thy mouth, we shall see some profane saint or other popping out and marking thee for a malignant in a minute."

After remaining for some ten minutes more at the door, in slow and solemn converse with the host, Barecolt stalked into the house, and found Arrah Neil sitting with her beautiful head leaning on her fair hand, and her elbow resting on a table very respectably covered with provisions.

"Now let us to our meat," said Barecolt, "for we must soon be on our way again."

Falgate was instantly settling himself upon a stool to fall to without further ceremony; but the captain gave him a grave, admonishing look, and, standing before the table with his clasped hands resting on his stomach and the two thumbs elevated towards his chin, began a grace which had well-nigh exhausted the patience of Falgate before it was done, but which greatly edified the master of the house. After this was concluded, they all sat down to meat; and Barecolt, who well knew that the portion of good things which the saintly men of his day allotted themselves was by no means small, carved away at the joints without any modesty, and loaded his own plate amongst others with a mess sufficient for an ogre.

Alas for the brief period of mundane felicity! Scarcely had three mouthfuls passed between his grinders, scarcely had one deep draught from the foaming tankard wetted his lips, when the sound of many horses' feet was heard, and the next instant the detestable blast of the trumpet was once more heard before the door. The landlord, who, as was then very customary, had sat down to share the meal prepared for his guests, started up and ran out to the door, while Barecolt quietly approached the window and looked forth; then returning to the table, he whispered in a low voice to Diggory Falgate and Arrah Neil, "A party of the drunken tapsters and pimple-nosed serving-men whom the Roundhead rebels call cavalry. Master Falgate, be as silent as a church-mouse, I command you, and answer not more than a monosyllable, whatever is asked you."

"Are they from Hull?" demanded Arrah Neil in a tone of alarm, as Barecolt resumed his seat and began to eat.

"No, I think not," replied the gallant captain; "but we shall soon see, for here come some of them along the passage;" and as he spoke the door opened, giving admission to a stout, short-set man in a well-worn buff coat.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Parliamentarian looked at Captain Barecolt, and Captain Barecolt looked at the Parliamentarian. The former had a cynical sort of smile on his countenance, as if he recognised in the worthy captain a personage whom he had seen before under different circumstances; but Barecolt's face was a perfect blank, at least if that which bore so prominent a gnomon could be called so. At all events, it said nothing; there was not the slightest glance of recognition in his eyes; there was not the smallest curl of consciousness round his mouth. He looked full in the officer's face, with the stare of a stranger, for very nearly a minute, and then civilly asked him if he would not sit down and join their party.

"No, I thank you," replied the Parliamentarian, with the same sneering smile; "but I think I shall ask you to join ours."

"I am much obliged, my friend," replied Barecolt, without any change of countenance; "but I have nearly dined."

"Dined or not dined," rejoined the other, "you must come along with me."

"How now?" cried Barecolt, rising with a look of indignation; "I thought, from your look, that you were a God-fearing and worthy man; but if you be, as I now judge from your words, one of the malignant fermenters of strife in Israel, I tell you you are in the wrong part of the country to play your pranks, even if you had a company of swaggering rakehelly troopers at your heels."

"Come, come," replied the other, "I am what I seem, and what you know me right well to be. Did you ever hear of a certain Captain Batten, sir? Were you ever at such a place as Bishop's Merton?"

"Of a Captain Batten I have heard when I was in London," replied Barecolt boldly, "and I have seen him too, but you are not he; for, in the first place, he is a godly and well-disposed person, and in the next place I do not recollect you. Then, as for Bishop's Merton, the very name of it is naught, and smacks of Prelacy and Popery."

"I am not Captain Batten, certainly," replied the other; "but I was cornet of his troop when you were at Bishop's Merton, and I watched you well along the road for forty miles and more after you had made him prisoner. You have changed your dress, but I know you, Captain Barecolt."

"Captain Barecolt!" cried our worthy friend, lifting up his hands and eyes with a look of astonishment and indignation; "am I never to have done with Captain Barecolt? This is the third time within these four days that I have been mistaken for that good-for-nothing, worthless fellow. If ever I meet him I will cut off that nose of his, or he shall cut off mine, that there may be no more mistaking between us. However, sir, if you are really, as you say, a cornet of Captain Batten's troop, I am glad to meet you: there is my hand, and I am quite prepared to show you to your satisfaction that I am not the swaggering malignant you take me for, but a poor officer of French extraction,

whose parents took refuge in this land during the persecutions of those who fought as I do for the cause of true faith and freedom of conscienee. My name is Jersval, and you must, most likely, have heard of it, as I have for the last three months been assisting that worthy and pious man, Sir John Hotham, in strengthening the fortifications of Hull."

The officer looked at him for a moment or two with a bewildered stare; for, though he thought he could have sworn to the person of the man who had been pointed out to him, not many weeks before, as Captain Barecolt, a notorious malignant, yet the captain's coolness and effrontery were so great as almost to overbear his belief. He was not convinced, indeed, but he was staggered; and, being somewhat of a dogged nature, he resolved to resist giving credence to mere assertions, however boldly made.

"Come, come," he said, "you say you can give me proofs. Where are they? I know your face quite well. The proofs—the proofs, man, or you must away with me to Hull."

"Be that at your peril, sir," replied Barecolt, with an air of dignity. "I am travelling on business of importance for the governor, and I will resist being stopped to the shedding of blood. As to the proofs, here they are. You probably know Sir John Hotham's signature;" and as he spoke he drew forth from his pocket the pass which he had obtained from the governor of Hull.

So well had he combined all the particulars of his story, that every word in the pass tallied exactly with what he had said before. He was called therein the French officer, Captain Jersval, employed upon the fortifications; and all the authorities of the town and its dependencies, as well as all persons well affected to the State, were enjoined to give him free passage, aid, and assistance on all lawful occasions. The Parliamentarian, as he read, became more and more bewildered, and indeed somewhat doubtful of Captain Barecolt's identity. The landlord also joined in on behalf of his guest, and vouched for his having behaved himself in a very comely and discreet manner. The Roundhead was, however, of a stubborn and stiff-necked race, as I have before hinted. He was far more inclined to believe his own eyes than any piece of paper in the world; and, although he read the pass twice, he looked at Captain Barecolt often, each time muttering between his teeth an expression of conviction that he was right after all.

"Well, it does not signify," he said aloud at length; "you shall go to Hull. You may have stolen this pass, or forged it, for aught I know. Unless some one can swear that you are the same man here spoken of, back you shall troop."

"That I can swear," cried Diggory Falgate, starting up, and forgetting his companion's injunctions to silence.

"And who, in the fiend's name, may you be?" demanded the Parliamentary soldier, growing hot; for Barecolt had by this time quietly freed his long sword from the sheath, and placed his back towards the corner, giving a glance as he did so to the window, across which two other figures on horseback passed at the moment.

"Who am I?" said Falgate; "a citizen of Hull, sir; and I am ready to swear that I saw that gentleman walking and talking with the governor yesterday, and that he is the same to whom that pass was given."

"Go to, go to!" said the Parliamentarian scornfully; "you seem some mechanic, who can know nought of such matters. Meddle with what concerns you, good man. Landlord, call in two of my troopers."

"Be it at your peril and theirs," replied Barecolt in a voice of extraordinary loudness, bringing the point of his weapon towards the chest of his opponent, who had taken a step forward. "Whoever says I am not Captain Jersval, lately employed by Sir John Hotham on the fortification of Hull, is a liar, and the consequence be upon his own head."

Just as he was pronouncing in a stentorian voice this recapitulation of the qualities and titles he thought fit to assume, and while Arrah Neil was drawing back to the farther side of the room with some alarm, but with the profound silence she had preserved throughout this scene, the landlord opened the door to obey the order he had received; but he was encountered at the threshold by two gentlemen, whom, to say truth, Captain Barecolt had seen a minute or two before, crossing the window on horseback. Now our worthy friend, at his heart, did not know whether to be sorry or rejoice at their presence, for there was much matter for very mingled feelings in their sudden appearance.

The first face that presented itself was that of Lord Beverley; and with all Barecolt's bad qualities he had a certain degree of chivalrous generosity in his nature, which made him unwilling to have another engaged in the same awkward scrape as himself, especially when, as in the case of the earl, many important interests, he feared, might be perilled by his capture, while his own apprehension would principally affect his own neck. He had therefore shouted aloud, as soon as he saw his noble companion dismount to enter the inn, for the purpose of giving him some notice of what was going on within; nor had his words failed to catch the earl's ear, for the distance from the door of the room to the door of the house was but a step, and the windows were open.

If, however, the sight of the earl caused Captain Barecolt as much alarm as pleasure, the face of the personage who followed was anything but satisfactory in his eyes; for the last time he had seen it was in earnest and apparently secret conference with Sir John Hotham; and our friend had no means whatsoever of knowing whether his evasion from Hull had become public before the earl and his companion had set out.

What was his surprise, however, when Lord Beverley advanced towards him, holding out his hand and exclaiming, "Ah, Captain Jersval, I was afraid I should have missed you, for we came by the cross-roads. But what is all this? Sword in hand, my gallant captain! What is all this, sir?" he continued, turning to the Parliamentary officer with an air of authority. "I hope you are not molesting this gentleman, who is a very grave and respectable person, and not one to draw his sword upon anybody without just occasion."

Barecolt was for once in his life wise enough not to say a word. He did not venture to hint at his feats in the Cevennes; he said nothing of Navarre or Aragon; he uttered not the name of Rochelle, but quietly left the earl to settle it all his own way.

Falgate, too, was overpowered at the sudden recognition of Captain Barecolt as Captain Jersval, and the Roundhead officer looked foolish and confounded, muttering for a moment or two something about "a mistake," till he recovered himself sufficiently to return to his point and declare, "that if ever human eyes were to be trusted, the man calling himself Jersval was no other than one Captain Barecolt, a notorious malignant."

"And pray, sir, do you know me?" demanded the earl; "for you seem to be much more knowing than your neighbours."

"No, I never saw you before," replied the man bluffly.

"But I know you, Master Stumpborough," said the earl's companion, advancing in return. "At least, if I am not mistaken, you are the man I was told to look for while accompanying this gentleman on his road. You are the cornet of Batten's troop of horse, are you not?"

"The same, sir," replied the other, with a stiff bow; "it seems we shall get at the truth of the matter now."

"It is only your stupid thick head that has prevented your getting at it before, Master Stumpborough," replied the gentleman. "This person whom you persist in calling Barecolt—you must be a bare colt yourself for your pains—is Captain Jersval, who has been employed by Sir John Hotham in strengthening the defences of our town, and who is now going on with this gentleman upon business of importance. We have been looking for him all along the road; so, if you had stopped or injured him, you would have lost your ears for your pains."

"I told him so! I told him so! I told him so!" cried Barecolt, at every pause in the other's words.

But the gentleman from Hull proceeded to hand a small paper to the Parliamentarian. "There is a word or two for you from Sir John. Now get ready to march on without further delay. I will return with you. I think, sir," he continued, addressing the earl, "you will not want me any more."

"No, I thank you, sir," replied Lord Beverley; "I can find my way on with my companions here. Commend me to Sir John, and accept my best thanks for your company so far."

While these few words were passing between the royalist nobleman and his companion of the road, the Roundhead officer had been spelling through Sir John Hotham's note, looking both puzzled with the writing and confounded with all that had lately taken place. When he had done, however, he thought fit to make an apology to Barecolt for taking him for the man he really was.

"I will never believe my eyes again, sir," he said, "for I would have sworn that you were that blaspheming ribaldy varlet, Barecolt, only dressed in a brown suit and with a steeple-crowned hat on. You are as like as two peas; only, now I think of it, he may be a little taller. But I hope you do not bear malice, sir; now I know who you are, I am satisfied; I only wished to do my duty."

"I certainly do not thank you, sir, for taking me, a peaceable and God-fearing man, for a blaspheming ribaldy varlet," replied Barecolt, with a solemn air; "but I forgive you, sir, I forgive you! every man needs forgiveness more or less. And so farewell; but use your eyes to better purpose another time, and if ever you see Captain Barecolt, tell him that when next he and Jersval meet, I will set such a mark upon him that there shall be no more mistakes; and so fare you well."

A few words had in the meanwhile passed in a low tone between the earl and his companion from Hull, and the latter then took his leave, seeing the commander of the party of troopers and the landlord of the house out before him. Barecolt immediately turned a glance full of merriment to Lord Beverley; but that nobleman with a grave face put his finger to his lips, and then, seating himself at the table, said, "Well, Captain Jersval, by your leave I will share your dinner, which, by the fulness of the plates, seems to have been somewhat unpropitiously interrupted."

"Certainly, certainly, sir," said Barecolt, resuming his seat at the head of the table. "Come, Falgate; come, Mistress Arrah Neil."

At the latter name the earl started, and gazed at Arrah for a moment; but took no further notice, and only whispered to Barecolt, "Make haste!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

THERE was a jingling of arms and a shouting of words of command at the door of the inn, somewhat too much of the trumpet, and a great deal too much talking for a veteran force; and then the order was given to march, followed by trampling of horses' feet in not the most orderly progression upon the road. The mouth of Captain Barecolt had been busy for the last five minutes upon beef and cabbage, and much execution had it done in that course of opera-

tions; but no sooner had the sounds of the retiring party diminished than it opened, evidently with the purpose of giving utterance to the pent-up loquacity which had long been struggling in his throat. But the Earl of Beverley made him a second significant sign to be silent, and his caution was not unnecessary, for at that moment mine host was standing at the back of the door with a few silver pieces in his hand, grumbling internally at the small pay of the Parliamentary party, and ready to overhear anything that was said by his other guests. The next moment he opened the door of the room in which they were dining, and found them all eating and drinking in very edifying silence. His presence did not seem to discompose them in the least, and the only effect it had upon any one was to induce the earl to point to the huge black jack in the midst of the table, saying the few but gratifying words, "More ale!"

The landlord hastened to replenish the tankard; but as there were no ingenious contrivances in those days for conjuring up various sorts of beer at will from the depths of a profound cellar, and as the house boasted no tapster, the host himself had to draw the liquor from the cask, and the earl took advantage of his absence to say to Barecolt and Falgate, "One more draught, my friends, if you will, and then to our horses' backs. Are you rested enough to travel on, fair lady, for I have business of much importance on hand?"

"Quite, sir," replied Arrah Neil; "I am only too glad to go on."

"I am rejoiced to see you here," continued the earl; "but we must not venture to speak more till we have nothing but the free air around us."

The next instant the landlord reappeared, and the earl, taking the black jack from his hands, put his lips to it, but passed it on, after barely tasting the contents. Barecolt did it more justice, in a long deep draught; and Falgate well-nigh drained it to the bottom. As soon as this ceremony was concluded, Barecolt and the rest of the party rose, and the earl returned thanks for the daily bread they had received, at less length, but with greater devotion than his companion might have done.

"Now, Captain Jersval," he said, when this was done, "you see to the horses, while I pay the score." And when Barecolt returned, he found the face of his host bearing a much better satisfied look, after settling with his present guests, than it had assumed after the departure of him whom the good man mentally termed a beggarly cornet of horse.

The earl then placed Arrah Neil in the saddle, sprang upon the back of a handsome, powerful charger, and, followed quickly by Barecolt and slowly by Falgate, took his way along the lane in which the house stood, choosing without hesitation many a turning and many a by-path, much to the admiration of the worthy captain, who had a natural fondness for intricate ways.

"You seem to know the road right well," he said in a low tone to the earl, when he could refrain no longer.

"I have known it from my boyhood," replied Lord Beverley; but he made no further answer, and rode on in silence till the path they followed opened out upon one of the wide open moors not unfrequently met with even now in that part of the country, and which at that season was all purple with the beautiful flower of the heath.

"Now," observed the earl, "we can speak freely. You are full of wonder and curiosity, I know, captain; but first tell me," he continued, looking behind towards Diggory Falgate, who was labouring after them about three hundred yards in the rear, "whom have you got there?"

"Oh, a very honest fellow, my lord," replied Barecolt, "who must needs go join the king, and be a soldier."

"Put him into the infantry, then," said the earl. "But are you sure of him?"

"Quite," replied Barecolt; "he aided me last night to get speech with you in the block-house, and would not have cared if it had put his neck in a noose."

"Enough—enough!" said the earl; "it had well-nigh been an unlucky business for all; but that matters not. The man showed his devotion, and therefore we may trust him. And now, fair lady, so long and so anxiously sought, I can scarcely believe my eyes to find you here upon the coast of Yorkshire. But, doubtless, you do not know me; let me say that I am an old friend of Lord Walton."

"Oh yes, sir," replied Arrah Neil; "I remember you well. You were at Bishop's Merton that terrible night before the fire. You passed me as I sat by the well watching for Lord Walton's return, to tell him what they plotted against him; and you asked your way, and spoke kindly to me. Oh, I remember you well; but I wonder you remember me, for I am much changed."

"You are indeed," replied the earl; "not only in dress, but in speech. I could hardly at that time wring a word from you, though I was anxious to know if I could give you aid or help."

"I was at that time in deep grief," replied Arrah Neil, "and that with me is always silent; but, besides, I had one of my cloudy fits upon me—those cloudy fits that are now gone for ever."

"Indeed!" said the earl; "what has happened to dissipate them?"

"Memory," replied Arrah Neil. "At that time all the past was covered with darkness previous to that period at which I arrived at Bishop's Merton; but still in the darkness it seemed as if I saw figures moving about, different from those that surrounded me, and as if I heard tongues speaking that had ceased to sound upon my ear. And so longingly, so earnestly, used I to look upon that cloud over the past—so completely used it to withdraw my thoughts from the present—so anxious used I try

to see those figures and to hear those voices more distinctly, that I do not wonder people thought me mad. I thought myself so at times."

"But still," rejoined Lord Beverley, "how has all this been removed?"

"Because the cloud is gone," replied Arrah Neil, with a smile that made her fair face look angelic,—"because to remember one scene, one hour, one person, connected with the past, woke up memory as if she had been sleeping; and daily and hourly since she has been bringing up before me the pictures of other days, till all is growing clear and bright."

"I can understand all that," said the earl, with interest; "but I would fain hear how it happened that memory had for so long failed you at a particular point."

"It is strange indeed," said Arrah Neil thoughtfully; "but I suppose it sometimes happens so after such a terrible fever as that which I had at Hull, and of which my poor mother died."

"That explains the whole," replied the earl; "such is by no means an uncommon occurrence. Was this many years ago?"

"Oh yes," replied Arrah Neil; "when I was very young. I could not be more than eight or nine years old; for that good kind woman, the landlady of the inn, where we then lodged, told me the other day that it was between nine and ten years ago. Those were sad times," she said.

"They were indeed," said the Earl of Beverley, a deep shade coming over his brow. "As sad to you, it seems, as to me, for we both then lost those that were dearest to us."

He paused for a moment or two, looking down upon his horse's crest with a stern and thoughtful expression of countenance; and then, raising his head, he shook his rein with a quick and impatient gesture, saying, "It is not good to think of such things. Come, Barecolt, now to satisfy your curiosity as far as is reasonable. I see that you have scarcely been able to keep it within bounds; but first let me thank you for your efforts to set me free; and, understand me, I am not one to limit my gratitude to words."

"But your lordship said it had well-nigh been an unlucky business for us all," exclaimed Captain Barecolt; "and, to say truth, as soon as the door was open, I saw that I had got into the wrong box, as it is called. There was somebody behind the curtain, I suspect; and I do not know," he continued, "whether it would be discreet to ask who it was."

"There need be no secret about it now," replied the earl. "It was no other than my worthy friend, Sir John Hotham, the governor, who wished to hold some private communication with me. He feared, when you tried to open the door, that it was some one come to spy upon his actions; and, to tell the truth, I was very apprehensive lest your inopportune appearance should be the means not only of breaking off my conversation with him, but of getting you yourself hanged for a spy. I had no time for consideration, and therefore it was that I told you to get out of Hull as fast as possible, and wait for me on the road. I had still less time to think of what account I should give of you to Sir John; but the truth, when it can be told, my good captain, is always the best; and as the governor had already promised to set me at liberty speedily, I thought fit to tell him that you were an attached dependant of mine, who had foolishly thought fit to risk your own life to set me free. I told him, moreover, that I had directed you to get out of the town as soon as you could, and wait for me on the road, trusting to his promise for speedy liberation. He pronounced the plan a good one, and made arrangements for sending Colonel Warren with me to insure my passing safe, if I should meet this party of horse with whom I just now found you embroiled."

"This Colonel Warren must be quick at taking a hint," replied Barecolt; "for he certainly entered into your lordship's schemes in my poor favour with great skill and decision."

"He is a very good man, and well affected," replied the earl; "the only one, indeed, in Hull on whom Sir John Hotham can rely. He was prepared, however; for, just before we set out this morning, as he told me afterwards, first a rumour, and then a regular report from the gates, reached the governor, to the effect that you had run away from the town. Sir John replied coldly to the officer who brought him the intelligence, that you had not run away, but had been sent by him on business of importance; and that for the future, when on guard at the gates, he had better mind his own business, which was to prevent the enemy from coming in, and not to meddle with those who went out. He then explained to Warren that we should find you on our way; and in half an hour we came up the river in a boat, mounted the horses which had been sent to meet us a couple of miles from the town, and fell in with the party of horse, as you know."

"Truth is best, as you say," replied Barecolt; "but yet I do honour a man who, when need compels him, can tell a sturdy lie with a calm and honest countenance; and in this respect the worthy Colonel Warren certainly deserves high renown, for he vouched for my being Captain Jersval with as sincere and as innocent a face as a lamb's head at Easter."

"I fear he does not merit your praise," replied the earl, "and I do not think he would exactly covet it; but at all events he did not know you to be any other than Captain Jersval; for my conversation about you with Sir John Hotham was but short, and it did not occur to me to mention your real name."

"Lucky discretion!" cried Barecolt; "but, in good sooth, my lord, we must wait a little for my good friend, Diggory Falgate, whose bones are already aching from his first acquaintance with a horse's back, and who cannot keep up with us at the pace we go."

"What hour is it?" said the earl. "We have not yet made much way, and I would fain be at Market Wighton or at Pocklington before

night. We have taken a great round to avoid some dangers on the Beverley road, otherwise the distance to York is not more than forty miles."

Having ascertained that it was not yet more than two o'clock, the earl agreed to pause a little for the benefit of good Diggory Falgate, and, about two miles farther on, stopped at a little village to feed the horses, in order to enable them to make as long a journey as possible before night.

The aspect of the landlord and landlady of the house at which they now paused was very different from that of their late host. The latter was a buxom dame of forty-five, with traces of beauty passed away, a coquettish air, a neat foot and instep, and a bodice laced with what the Puritans would have considered very indecent red ribbons. Her husband was a jovial man, some ten years older than herself, with a face as round and rosy as the setting sun, a paunch beginning to be somewhat unwieldy, but with a stout pair of legs underneath it, which bore it up manfully. He wore his hat on one side as he came out to greet his new guests, and a cock's feather therein, as if to mark peculiarly his abhorrence of puritanical simplicity.

The first appearance of Lord Beverley and his party, the plainness of their dress, and the soberness of their air, did not seem much to conciliate his regard; but the nose of Captain Barecolt had something pleasant and propitious in his eyes, and the light ease with which the Earl of Beverley sprang to the ground and lifted Arrah Neil from the saddle also found favour in his sight; for the worthy landlord had a very low estimation of the qualities of all the Parliamentary party, and could not make up his mind to believe that any one belonging to it could sit a horse, wield a sword, or fire a shot, with the same grace and dexterity as a Cavalier.

Just as the earl was leading in Arrah Neil, however, and Barecolt was following, Diggory Falgate, to use a nautical term, hove in sight; and the landlord, who was giving orders to his ostler for the care of the horses, rubbed his eyes and gazed, and then rubbed his eyes again, exclaiming, "By all the holy martyrs! I do believe that it is that jovial blade Falgate, who painted my sign, and kept us in a roar all the time it was doing."

"Ay, sir, that's just Diggory," answered the ostler, "though I wonder to see him a-horseback; for, if you remember, he once got upon our mare, and she shot him over her head in a minute."

"Ah, jolly Falgate!" cried the landlord, advancing towards him; "how goes it with you?"

"Hardly, hardly, good Master Stubbs," answered the painter. "This accursed beast has beaten me like a stock-fish; and I am sure that my knees, with holding on, are at this moment all black and blue, and green and yellow, like an unscraped pullet."

"Faith, I am sorry to hear it," replied the landlord; "but you will come to it, you will come to it, Master Falgate. All things are beaten into us by an application on the same part, from our first schooling to our last. But tell me, do you know who these people are who have just come?"

"Tell you! To be sure!" cried Diggory Falgate; "I am of their party. One is a great lord."

"What! the long man with the nose?" cried the worthy host. "'Tis a lordly nose—that I'll vouch for."

"No, no; not he," replied the painter; "he is a great fire-eating captain, the devil of a fighting soldier, who swallows you up a whole squadron in a minute, and eats up a battalion of infantry, pikes and all, like a boy devouring a salt herring, and never caring for the bones. No, no; 'tis the other is the lord."

"He's mighty plainly dressed for a lord," replied the host. "Why, my jerkin's worth his, and a shilling to boot!"

"Ay, because we have just made our escape from Hull," replied the painter, "and we are all in disguise; but I can tell you, nevertheless, that he is a great lord, and very much trusted by the king."

"Then I'm the man for him!" said the landlord; and hurrying in, hat in hand, he addressed the Earl of Beverley, saying, "What's your lordship's pleasure? What can I get for you, my lord? Has your lordship any news from Nottingham or York? I am upon thorns till I hear from Nottingham; for I've got two sons—fine boys as ever you set your eyes upon—gone to join the king there, just a week ago last Monday, and my two best horses with them."

"In whose regiment are they?" asked the earl.

"Oh, in the noble Earl of Beverley's," replied the host; "he's our lord and master here, and as soon as one of his people came down to raise men, my boys vowed they'd go."

"They shall be taken care of," said the earl, laying his hand upon the landlord's shoulder, with a meaning smile, which let worthy Master Stubbs into the secret of his name in a moment. "And now, my good friend," he continued, "forget 'your lordship' with me, and, if you want really to serve me, send somebody to the top of the hill, to bring me word if he sees any parties moving about in the country. I have heard of such things, and would be upon my guard."

The landlord winked one small black eye till it was swallowed up in the rosy fat that surrounded it. Then, shutting the door of the room, he approached the earl, saying in a mysterious tone, "You are quite right, you are quite right, my lord. There are such things in the country. One troop passed through the village this morning, and there is another handful of them left over at the hamlet, beyond the edge, as we call the hill. There are not above a

score of them; and if they were to come into the village, we would soon show them the way out, for we have surly fellows amongst us, and do not love Roundheads here. I will send over to watch them, sure enough; but if your lordship would like to make a sweep of them, we could mount half a dozen men in the village, who would break some heads with right good-will; and in two or three hours we could have help over from the Lady Margaret Langley's, for one of her people was here yesterday, and told me that they expected a party of Cavaliers there, either that day or to-day."

Lord Beverley paused and meditated for a moment; but he then replied, "No, my good friend—no. The business I am on is too important to run any risks before it is accomplished; and, in the next place, it would not be right to bring down the vengeance of these people upon good Lady Margaret. It is about nine miles to her house, I think, too; so that would cause delay. Send some one to watch the gentry from the hill. Have the horses fed with all despatch, and give us a flagon of wine, for we have two thirsty men in our company."

"You shall have the best in the land, my lord," replied the jolly host. "Only to think of my not knowing you."

The wine was soon brought; and Barecolt, who had been delivering himself of a few marvels in the kitchen, followed it quickly, and shared in the draught. The horses, accustomed to hard work, were not without appetite for their provender, so that their meal was speedily despatched. But when the earl and his companions once issued forth to pursue their way, he was surprised to find four stout men, mounted and armed by the care of the good landlord, to escort him on his journey. He might perhaps have preferred a less numerous party, in the hope of passing unobserved; but, while he was discussing the matter with the host, a boy who had been sent up to watch ran back into the village, bringing the news that the men were moving from Little Clive along the high road towards the top of the hill.

"Well, then, I will take the road to the right — towards Beverley," said the earl. "Mount, mount! and let us away with all speed. Amongst the trees they will hardly see us, if we can get a mile on the way. Come, Master Falgate, we must have no lagging behind, or, by heaven, you will fall into their hands!"

"I would rather be bumped to death," replied Falgate, clambering up into his saddle; "and that wine has healed some of my bruises."

"We'll make a good fight of it if they do catch us," said one of the mounted men: "there are not above a score of them."

"Come on, then—come on quick!" cried the earl; and, setting spurs to his horse, he rode out of the village, fair Arrah Neil placed between himself and Barecolt, Falgate with their escort bringing up the rear.

They had reached the wooded lane which led along under the slope towards Beverley before the party of horse which had been seen by the boy appeared upon the top of the hill. But a break of some two or three hundred yards in length in the hedgerow occurred at the distance of about a mile, and by the movements that the earl remarked amongst the troopers, whom he now saw distinctly, he judged that his little party was also observed.

"Spur on, my lord!" cried Barecolt, who had also turned round to look. "They are coming after us, but we have got a fair start. Spur on, Falgate, or you will be caught!" and, putting their horses to their utmost speed, they rode along the lane, while the faint blast of a trumpet was borne by the wind from above, and the small body of cavalry was seen to take its way quickly over the open fields, as if to cut them off.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Leaving the fugitives in that period of their flight with which the last chapter closes, I must, with the benevolent reader's good leave, return to personages whom I have left somewhat too long, and for whom I own a deep interest.

Annie Walton—sweet Annie Walton—stood, as the reader may recollect, conversing with her worthy aunt, Lady Margaret Langley, and had just announced that amongst the voices she had heard below was one, the tones of which recalled a person who ought to have been over the sea long before. Now, it may be supposed, and, considering all things, not unnaturally, that she alluded thus vaguely to the Earl of Beverley. Such, however, was not the case; for the voice of Lord Beverley was rich and musical, while the sounds she heard were far from being particularly harmonious; and an oath or two, pronounced in a somewhat loud tone, and intermixed with laughter, were certainly not of the vocabulary which he was most accustomed to employ.

At the same time, the stag-hound which followed them along the passages pricked up his ears with a sharp growl, and took two or three quick steps in advance, as if to spring forward on the first occasion. Lady Margaret chid him back, however. "Who is it, child?" she asked. "Who do you fancy it is? I expect no one."

"I think the voice is that of a certain Captain Barecolt," replied Miss Walton; "not a very pleasing personage, dear aunt, but one who once did us very good service—a brave man and a good soldier, my brother says, but sadly given to gasconade."

"If he be a brave man and a good soldier, a loyal subject, and have done you and Charles good service, he shall be right welcome, Annie," replied the old lady; "and he may gasconade to the moon if he pleases. Down, sir! down! Will you show your white teeth when I forbid you? But what can they be about, Annie?

Never did I hear such a bustle. Hark! there is Charles's voice as loud as the other. Come quickly! let us see."

"Quick! out with the horses!" cried the voice of Lord Walton below. "See them out like lightning. Lie there, Francis, for a moment. Call my aunt—call my sister! By heaven, they shall rue it! Which way did they seem to take?"

"They halted before the house," said a faint voice, which made Miss Walton's cheek turn pale; "flushed with their success, they may dare to attack it. Captain, I owe you my life."

"Nothing, nothing, my lord!" rejoined the voice of Barecolt. "But we must be quick, Lord Walton, or their courage may fail, and they may run away, taking her with them. Can I get any better arms? for we had nothing but our swords—'twas that which ruined us."

"There are plenty in the hall," exclaimed Lady Margaret Langley, who was now entering the room in which she had left her nephew.

At the same moment, one of Lord Walton's servants appeared at the other door, saying, "The horses are ready, my lord. The people seem going up the lane."

The scene the room presented was very different from that which it had displayed when Annie Walton and Lady Margaret left it. Lying on some cushions which had been cast down upon the ground was the graceful form of the Earl of Beverley, evidently wounded, and somewhat faint. By his side stood Lord Walton, holding a light in his hand, and gazing down upon his friend's countenance, while two stout countrymen, one with a drawn sword in his hand, appeared a little behind, and the tall figure of Captain Barecolt was seen through the open door in the vestibule beyond, reaching down some arms from the wall.

"Dear Annie—dear aunt—look to the earl," cried Charles Walton. "He is shot through the leg. I cannot stop to tell you more; I must pursue them. Ha! see, he is bleeding terribly—'tis that which makes him faint."

"Go, Charles! go!" exclaimed the earl. "I shall do well enough. The wound is nothing; 'tis but the loss of blood. Quick, quick! away, or you will not catch them."

Lord Walton gave one more look to his friend, and a sign to his sister to attend to the earl immediately, and then quitted the room. The sound of prancing hoofs and jingling arms was heard without, then the creaking of the drawbridge as it was lowered, and then the fierce galloping of horse along the lane. Lady Margaret and Miss Walton knelt by the wounded man's side and asked him regarding his wound; but the voice of Annie was faint and low, and her hand trembled so that she could hardly hold the light while her aunt endeavoured to stanch the blood. More effectual assistance, however, was rendered by the servant William, who ran in the moment he had secured the bridge, and with his aid the wound was soon discovered, pouring forth a torrent of blood from some large vessel cut by the ball, which had passed quite through the leg a few inches below the knee. Lady Margaret, however, had some skill in leechcraft, and William by no means an inexperienced assistant. Bandages were speedily procured, and with little trouble and no loss of time the wound was bound up and the bleeding stopped.

But few words were spoken while this took place, for good Lady Margaret, feeling herself in a position of authority, imposed silence upon all around her. She was too much occupied herself in her surgical operations to remark the pale countenance and anxious eyes of her niece, or the smile of confidence and encouragement with which the earl strove to quiet her apprehensions.

Just as the old lady had finished her task, however, through the doors of the vestibule and hall, which had been left open, was heard the sharp report of pistol shots, and a confused murmur as of distant tumult. Lady Margaret started and looked round, murmuring, "Ay, strife, strife! This is the world thereof."

Miss Walton pressed her hand upon her heart, but said nothing, and the earl, giving a glance to the servant William, exclaimed,—

"For God's sake, run out and see! Have the drawbridge ready, too. If we could have got in at once, the worst part of the mischief would have been spared."

"I must go—indeed I must!" said Annie Walton. "Oh, poor Charles! Heaven protect him!" And, running out of the room, she crossed the stone court, and, bending over the low wall at the farther angle, she gazed down the road in the direction from which the sounds appeared to come. Night had now set in, but yet the darkness was not very profound, and Miss Walton fancied that she beheld several moving figures at some distance up the long straight avenue. The next moment there was a flash, followed by a sharp report—then another and another; and on each occasion the sudden light showed her for an instant a number of men and horses, all grouped together in wild and confused strife. The instant after, a horseman came down the road at headlong speed, and Annie Walton exclaimed, "Oh, the drawbridge! William, let down the drawbridge!"

"Wait a minute, my lady," replied the servant; "it is not every man that gallops who is coming here."

He calculated more accurately in his coolness than the lady had done in her apprehensions, for the fugitive passed by without drawing a rein, and William turned round to give her comfort, saying, "That's a sign my young lord has won the day—or rather the night, I should call it. Hark! there are some more coming. It is he this time, for their pace is more quiet."

Annie Walton approached nearer to the bridge, murmuring a prayer to God for her

brother's safety, and straining her eyes upon the advancing body of horsemen, who came on at an easy trot down the road. At their head was a figure which she felt sure was that of her brother, but yet she could not be satisfied till she exclaimed,—

"Charles, is that you? Are you safe?"

"Yes, yes; all safe," replied the voice of Lord Walton; "some of us a little hurt, but not seriously, I hope. We have made them pay dearly for their daring. Run in, Annie, run in, and I will join you in a minute."

While William and old Dixon unhooked the chains of the drawbridge from the posts and let it slowly down, Miss Walton returned to her room, where she had left her aunt and the Earl of Beverley, exclaiming, with a heart relieved,—

"He is safe! he is safe!"

Lord Beverley took her hand as she approached his side, gazing earnestly in her face, and saying, "Thank God!"

Annie Walton felt his look and his words almost as a reproach for having forgotten him in her anxiety for her brother; though, in truth, such was far from the earl's meaning, his only thought at that moment being, what might have been the fate of that sweet girl had she lost both her brother and her lover in one night.

"And how are you, Francis?" said Annie Walton, wishing, with all the frankness of her heart, to make up for her absence by giving him the name she knew he would love the best upon her lips. "Forgive me for leaving you; but, oh, I was terrified for Charles!"

Before the earl could reply, there was the sound of many persons' feet in the hall and the vestibule, and the voice of Lord Walton was heard giving various orders and making inquiries concerning the wounds which his followers had received. It seemed that they were but slight, or at all events that the men made light of them, for they all protested that there was no harm done, and the only one who seemed to complain was the gallant Captain Barecolt, who replied to the young nobleman's inquiries,—

"It is the most unfortunate thing in the world, my lord. I had rather the fellow had run me through the body."

"But it is not serious, surely, captain," said Lord Walton. "Let me see."

"Serious, my lord! it is ruin!" replied Barecolt. "It is right across my nose. I am marked for life, so that I shall never be able to conceal myself or pass for Captain Jersval any more."

Lord Walton laughed, replying,—

"You will do so better than ever, captain; for you are so well known without the mark that no one will know you with it."

"That is true too," replied Captain Barecolt; and the next moment Lord Walton, advancing through the vestibule, pushed open the door, which his sister had left ajar, and entered Lady Margaret's sitting-room.

He was not alone, however; for by the hand he led poor Arrah Neil, somewhat pale, and with her hair dishevelled, but perhaps only looking the more exquisitely beautiful, as the large chestnut curls fell wildly round her fair brow and over her soft rounded cheek.

With a cry of joy and surprise, Annie Walton sprang forward and took the poor girl in her arms, exclaiming,—

"Ah, dear Arrah! this is a glad sight indeed!"

But the effect of this sudden apparition upon Lady Margaret Langley was even greater than upon her niece. She gazed upon Arrah Neil with a look expressive of more than wonder; and then, hurrying forward, she took her by the hand, fixing her eyes upon her countenance, and asked in a tremulous voice,—

"Who is this?"

"It is Arrah Neil, a much-valued friend of ours," replied Annie Walton, unwilling to enter into any explanation of the poor girl's history and circumstances in her presence.

"Arrah Neil!" repeated Lady Margaret in a thoughtful and even melancholy tone, and then, waving her head sadly to and fro, she let go Arrah's hand, retreated to the other side of the room, and, casting herself into her usual chair, fell into a deep fit of thought. At the same time Lord Walton led Arrah to a seat, and, bending down, spoke a few words to her in a low voice, to tranquillize her and make her feel at ease. But, while he was still speaking, the large stag-hound rose up from the side of Lady Margaret's chair, walked slowly across the room, and laid his huge muzzle on Arrah's knee. She showed no fear, and indeed took little heed, only gently patting the dog's head, as he fixed his keen, bright eyes on her face. The next moment, however, he raised himself a little and licked her hand, and Lady Margaret Langley, moved by emotions which she explained to no one, pressed her handkerchief upon her eyes and burst into tears.

Neither Lord Walton nor his sister judged it right to take any notice of the good old lady's agitation; but, while Miss Walton stood beside poor Arrah Neil and conversed with her quietly, making her own remarks meanwhile upon the great change which had taken place in her manners and appearance, the young nobleman crossed the room to the side of his wounded friend, and inquired how he felt himself.

"Oh, better, better!" replied the earl. "It was but loss of blood, Charles; the shot that passed through my leg and killed my charger must have cut some large blood-vessel, and I, not knowing that, went on fighting on foot by the side of that poor young lady, whose horse—"

"I know, I know!" said Lord Walton. "It fell with her. She told me; but what happened then?"

"Why, after a time," replied the earl, "a sort of giddiness came over me, and I fell. The scoundrel Batten had just got his sword to my

throat, when that gallant fellow Barecolt, after having despatched another, sprang to the ground beside me and threw the Roundhead back. Two of them were then upon him at once; but, on my honour, we have done him injustice in thinking all his strange stories mere rhodomontade; for hand to hand with them he kept up the fight, giving them blow for blow on either side, with a skill in the use of his arms such as I have seldom seen, till at length I got upon my feet again, and, though staggering like a drunken man, contrived to call one of them off, while he put an end to Batten, sending his sword through and through him, cuirass and all. We then got the lady on horseback, for the other man turned for a moment and ran, and, catching Batten's horse, I mounted, and we began our retreat hither. The fellows who had been driven off rallied, however, and charged us just as we got to the gates, for the bridge was up and we could not pass; but Barecolt plunged through the stream, clambered over the wall, and unhooked the chains. We were all by this time in confusion and disarray,—I so faint that I could scarcely strike a blow, and the rest scattered about, fighting as they could. We made a stand at the bridge till I thought all had entered, and then raised it. When in the court, however, I found that the poor girl was left behind. That discovery, together with the loss of blood, made me fall as I was dismounting, and they carried me in hither, where I have lain, as you know, ever since. But, hark you, Charles! ask your good aunt if she have not some cordial, as these good ladies sometimes have, which will bring back my strength speedily, for on my life I must go forward to-morrow morning early."

"Impossible, Francis!" replied Lord Walton; "quite impossible. At the best, you cannot travel for a week or more."

"Good faith! but I must," replied the earl. "I have tidings of the utmost importance for the king."

"Then you must trust them to me," replied Lord Walton; "for the journey to York would cost you your life. If it be absolutely necessary for you to see the king yourself, I will send a litter for you and an escort from York; but, if the tidings be immediate, you had better trust them to me."

"It is but weakness, it is but weakness," said the earl. "To-morrow I shall be better. Ask your aunt, Charles, if she have not some of those strength-giving balms that poets and doctors talk of. But what has affected her thus? She has been weeping."

"Indeed, I know not," answered Lord Walton. "I will go and speak to her;" and, moving quietly across the room, he seated himself by the side of Lady Margaret, who by this time had taken the handkerchief from her eyes, and was gazing sadly and stedfastly upon the floor.

"What is the matter, my dear aunt?" he said in a low tone; "what has affected you thus?"

"A dream, Charles," replied the old lady; "a dream of the past. But it is gone. I will no more give way to such visions." And, rising from her chair, she advanced directly towards Arrah Neil, and, again taking her hand, she kissed her tenderly, saying, "You are so like one that is gone and who was very dear, that I was overcome, sweet child. But I shall love you well, and you must love me too."

"Oh, that I will!" replied Arrah Neil; "I always love those that are good to me; and because they have been few, I love them the better."

"Right, right!" exclaimed Lady Margaret. "Love few, and love well. But now to other things. Charles, this noble friend of yours must be carried to bed, there to lie till we are sure the wound will not burst forth again."

"Why, my dear aunt," replied Lord Walton, "his rash lordship tells me he would fain go on to York to-morrow."

"Madness!" answered Lady Margaret; "but all his family were mad before him," she added in a lower voice. "His father thought to win honour and gratitude by doing good; his mother died of grief. Madness, you see, on both parts. He has told me who he is, so I wonder not at any insanity. Now, I will answer for it, he thinks it a duty to go on; but I will tell him it cannot be. My lord the earl, you are a prisoner here till further orders. It is vain to think to move me. For your dear mother's sake I will be your jailor, let the business that calls you hence be what it will. So now to bed, my lord; you shall have that which will restore your strength as quickly as may safely be, but we must have no fever if we can help it; and I will tell you plainly that, were you to attempt to reach York to-morrow, you would go no farther. I will have the people in to carry you to the room prepared for Charles; it is close at hand. He must shift with another."

"Nay, nay!" said the earl; "I can walk quite well, dear lady. I am better now; I am stronger. Charles will lend me his arm."

"Take care, then," replied Lady Margaret, "and do not bend your knee, or we shall have it gushing forth again. Here, tall man, whoever you are," she continued, turning to Captain Barecolt, who entered the room at the moment, "put your hand under the earl's arm, while my nephew aids him on the other side. There—that will do; now, gently. I will go before. Call some of the people, Annie."

Thus aided and escorted, the Earl of Beverley moved easily to the room which had been prepared for Lord Walton on the same floor, while Miss Walton followed anxiously, and paused for a moment while her aunt examined the bandages round his knee. Her lover marked the look of painful expectation with which she gazed; and perhaps no balm in all Lady Margaret's stores could have tended so much to restore health and strength as the deep interest that shone in her eyes.

"Do not be alarmed," he said, holding out

his hand to her; "this is a mere nothing, and they are all making more of it than it deserves. Go and comfort your fair companion, for she needs it much; but I shall see you to-morrow, shall I not, Annie?"

The last word was uttered in a low tone, as if he almost feared to speak it; but there are moments when a woman's heart grows bold, and those moments are especially when it is necessary to cheer and to console.

"Oh, certainly, Francis!" replied Miss Walton. "I will see you beyond doubt; my aunt and I will be your nurses. For the present, then, farewell. I will go and comfort poor Arrah, as you say."

When Annie Walton returned to the room where she had left Arrah Neil, she found her still seated, but with the great stag-hound, now with one paw upon her knee, looking up in her face as if he would fain have held some conversation with her had he but possessed the gift of speech. Arrah, too, was bending down and talking to him—smoothing his rough head with her hand, and seeming as much delighted with his notice as he appeared to be with hers. As soon as Miss Walton entered, however, she turned from her shaggy companion to her friend, and, advancing towards her, threw herself into her arms. For a moment she remained silent, with her eyes hid on the lady's shoulder, and when she raised them they were wet with bright drops; but Annie remarked, though without one spark of pride, that there was a great difference in the manner of Arrah Neil towards her. There was a something gone—something more than the mere look of deep, absent thought which used so frequently to shade her countenance. There had been a reserve, a timidity, in answering or addressing her, more than mere humility, which was no longer there. Often had she striven to reassure the poor girl, and to teach her to look upon the family at Bishop's Merton rather as friends than mere protectors; but, though Arrah Neil had ever been frank and true in her words, there seemed always a limit drawn in her manner which she never passed, except perhaps at times when she was peculiarly earnest towards the young lord himself. It had seemed as if she felt even painfully that she was a dependant, and resisted everything that might make her forget it for a moment.

Now, however, that restraint was gone; she gazed upon Annie Walton with a look of deep love; she kissed her as she would have kissed a sister; she poured forth her joy at seeing her again, in words full of feeling—ay, and of poetry; and the lady was glad that she did so. She would not for the world have said one syllable to check such familiarity, for the character and fate of Arrah Neil had been to her a matter of deep thought and deep interest. She felt, indeed, also, that after all that had passed—after the scenes they had shared in, and the anxieties and fears they had felt for each other—Arrah Neil could never be to her what she had formerly been; that there was something more in her bosom than pity and tenderness towards the poor girl; that there were affection, tenderness, companionship—not the mere companionship of hours and of dwelling-places, but the companionship of thoughts and interests, which is perhaps the strongest and most enduring of all human ties. There was even more than all this. The change in Arrah Neil went beyond mere manner; the tone of her mind and of her language had undergone the same; it seemed elevated, brightened, enlarged. She had always been graceful, though wild and strange. There had been flashes of a glowing fancy breaking forth, though oppressed and checked, like the flickering bursts of flame that rise fitfully up from a half-smothered fire; but now the mind shone out clear and unclouded, giving dignity and ease to every expression and every act, however plain the words or ordinary the movements; and Annie Walton felt that from that hour poor Arrah Neil must be to her as a friend.

"Come, dear Arrah," she said, "sit down beside me, and let us talk calmly. You are now amongst friends again—friends from whom you must never part more; and yet we will not speak now over anything that can agitate you. Lord Beverley tells me you have had much to suffer; and I am sure all the scenes you have gone through this day, and the fatigues you have endured, must have well-nigh worn you out and overpowered you."

"I am weary," she replied, wiping away some drops that still trembled on her eyelids; "but I have not suffered as you would do, were you to pass through the same. It is my fate to encounter terrible things—to pass through scenes of danger and difficulty. Such has been my course from childhood; such, perhaps, it may be to the end of life. I am prepared and ready, nay, more, accustomed to it; and when any new disaster falls upon me, I shall henceforth only look up to heaven, and say, 'O God! Thy will be done!' I am not a garden plant as you are, Annie. I am a shrub of the wilderness, and prepared to bear the wind and storm."

"Heaven forbid you should meet with many more, Arrah!" answered Miss Walton. "There are turns in every one's fate, and I trust that for you there are bright days coming."

"Still with an even mind will I try to bear them, be they fair or foul," said Arrah Neil,—"more calmly now than before; for much has happened to me that I will tell you soon; and I have found that those things which gave me most anguish have brought me happiness that I never dreamt of finding, and that there is a smile for every tear, Annie—a reward for every endurance."

"You have learned the best philosophy since we parted, dear girl," replied Miss Walton; "and in truth you are much changed."

"No, no!" said Arrah Neil eagerly; "I am not changed; I am the same as ever—just the

same. Have you not seen a little brown bud upon a tree in the spring-time, looking as if there were nothing in its heart but dry leaves? and then the sun shines upon it for an hour, and out it bursts all green and fresh. But still it is the same bud you looked at in the morning. As for my philosophy, if such be the name you give it, I have learned that in the course of this day. As I rode along, now hither, now thither, in our flight from Hull, I thought of all that has passed within the last two or three months: I thought of how I had grieved and how I had wept when they dragged me away from you and your kind brother; and at the same time I remembered what all that pain had purchased for me, and I asked myself if it might not be always so here, even on the earth. Ay, and more, Annie; if the grief and anguish of this world might not have its compensation hereafter. So, when I found myself surrounded by the troopers without, and saw that good lord borne in here wounded, and the bridge raised behind him, I said, 'Now is the trial. O God! Thy will be done!'"

Annie Walton gazed upon her with surprise, increasing every moment; but she would not suffer the effect produced upon her mind to be seen, lest she should alarm and check the fair being beside her; fearing, too, that at any moment one of those fits of deep, sad abstraction of mind should come upon her, which she could not believe to have wholly passed away.

She merely replied, then, "You say, dear Arrah, that the pain you felt in parting with us has purchased you some great happiness. May I ask you what it is?—from no idle curiosity, believe me, but merely because, as I have often shared and felt for your sorrows, Arrah, I would fain share and sympathize with your joy."

"I will tell you—I will tell you all," replied Arrah Neil, laying her hand upon Miss Walton's. "I must tell you, indeed, very soon; for I could not keep it in my own bosom, lest my heart should break with it. But I would fain tell him first—I mean your brother, who has been so kind and noble, so good and generous towards a poor girl like me, whom he knew not."

But, before she could conclude the sentence, Captain Barecolt returned from the chamber of the Earl of Beverley, and a conversation interesting to both was brought for the time to an abrupt conclusion.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The beauty of the illustrious Captain Barecolt, in its kind, was rather heightened than diminished by a large stripe of black plaster which he had drawn across the bridge of his egregious nose; for he was one of those provident men who never go without a certain store of needful articles in their pockets, and his professional habits had taught him exactly what sort of small commodities were most frequently required. Thus, there were few occasions on which that personage would have been found unprovided with a piece of strong cord, a sharp pocket-knife, a lump of wax, a corkscrew, a hand's-breadth of good sticking-plaster, and a crown-piece. I do not say more than one, for but too frequently the piece of silver was a mere unity; and, indeed, he seemed to have a pleasure in reducing it to solitude; for no sooner had it any companions than he took the most expeditious means of removing them. At the last crown, however, he always paused; and it seldom happened, what between good luck and occasional strong powers of abstinence, that sheer necessity compelled him to spend that piece before he had recruited his stock.

He now advanced towards Arrah Neil and Miss Walton with all the consciousness of great exploits about him; and, after a long inquiry regarding their health, began a recapitulation of all his deeds that day, notwithstanding the presence of an eye-witness, by which it would have appeared that he had killed at least seven of the enemy with his own hand; regretting, indeed, in a deprecatory tone, that he had not killed more, but attributing this shortcoming in comparison with his usual achievements to the care he had been obliged to take of the earl after he was wounded; otherwise, he hinted, he might have destroyed the whole force. He was still in full career when Lord Walton and Lady Margaret reappeared; and, whether it was to be attributed to the fact of his having delivered himself of a sufficient quantity of long pent-up hyperbole, or whether it was that he knew that the young lord was not likely to give entire credit to his military statements, certain it is that his tone became moderated as soon as that gentleman appeared.

Captain Barecolt, however, was obliged to answer several questions; for, while the lady of the house went to give orders for the accommodation of the numerous unexpected visitors by whom her house was thronged, Lord Walton proceeded to inquire how all the events of the day had come about, and especially how it had happened that a party of five or six persons, quietly crossing the country, were charged by a body of the Parliamentary horse.

"This is worse than civil war," he exclaimed; "and if such a state of things is to be established, we shall have nothing but anarchy from one end of the country to the other. Had you been an armed party, bearing the royal colours, with drum or trumpet, it might have been excusable, considering these lamentable dissensions; but to attack you thus, without cause and without warrant, was the act of a mere marauder. This Captain Batten, whom you have killed, I find, has met with too honourable a fate. He deserved to die by the hands of the hangman, and not by those of a gentleman."

"Yes, my lord," replied Barecolt, with an

air of calm grandeur; "I put him to death, amongst others, and we had no time to consider what sort of fate was meet for them. However, I must do the men justice, and say that I suspect they did not act without a motive, or perhaps without many. In the first place, I believe that I was the unhappy object of their enmity. I had been recognised at the first inn where we stopped by the cornet of this Captain Batten's troop; and though we were speedily joined by the noble earl and a certain Colonel Warren, the latter of whom vowed manfully that I was not the Captain Barecolt of whose little exploits they had heard so much, but one Captain Jersval, an officer employed by Sir John Hotham on the fortifications of Hull;—I never heard a man lie so neatly in my life, and he deserves great credit for the same;—although, I say, this Colonel Warren delivered me from the first danger, and carried Cornet Stumpborough back with him to Hull, yet I saw clearly that the worthy Roundhead was not convinced, and afterwards, as we were riding along, I caught a glimpse of a man, very like a trumpeter, going at full speed on our left."

"But what would that imply?" demanded Lord Walton.

"Simply that Cornet Stumpborough had sent off a messenger to tell his commander, Captain Batten, who knew me well from having seen me with your lordship on the march from Bishop's Merton, that he would catch me on the road if he looked out sharply. In this opinion I am confirmed from having heard, in the kitchen of an inn where we stopped to feed the horses, that this same trumpeter had been seen half an hour before galloping round on the outside of the village, and taking his way in the direction of Captain Batten's party. This might be one plea for attacking us; and another might be, that we were certainly riding as fast as we could go. Now every beast, my lord, has an inclination to run after another beast which it sees run away. Then again, when they had nearly come up with us, they commanded us to halt, an order which we disobeyed to the best of our ability. The natural consequence was they charged us immediately, and brought us fighting along the road for half a mile. Nevertheless, I am very much afraid that your lordship's humble servant was the great object of the attack."

"However that might be," replied Lord Walton, "my friend the Earl of Beverley has informed me of the gallant service you rendered on this occasion; and you may depend upon it, Captain Barecolt, that his majesty will have a full report thereof."

"A trifle, my lord, a mere trifle!" replied the worthy captain, with an indifferent air; "these are things that happen every day, and are hardly worthy of notice. If I have an opportunity afforded to me, indeed, of performing the same deeds that I achieved at Rochelle and in the Cevennes, then there will be something to talk of. The only thing, at present, for which I shall claim any credit," he continued, turning towards Arrah Neil, "is for the skill and dexterity which I displayed in setting free this young lady, and enabling her to acquire certain information regarding her birth, parentage, and education, as the broadsheet has it, which may be of vast importance to her."

"Indeed, sir, you have been most kind, zealous, and resolute in my behalf," replied Arrah Neil; "and though, perhaps, I may never have the means of showing you how grateful I am except in words, yet I shall be ever grateful, and there is One who rewards good deeds, even when those for whom they are done have no power to offer a recompense."

"Whatever he has done for you, my poor Arrah," said Lord Walton, "shall not go without reward, if I can give it. But what is this Captain Barecolt says about your birth and parentage? He rouses my curiosity."

"I will tell you all, my lord, when I can tell you alone," replied Arrah. "I mean all that I have heard, for I have no proof of the facts."

"But I have some proof," said Captain Barecolt, "for I have a copy of the paper I found amongst the old knave's goods—one Mr. Dry of Longsoaken, whom your lordship may remember. He did not carry off Mistress Arrah without a motive, and the paper shows clearly that she is not what she seems to be; that she is of high race, and, if I judge right, of large property."

Lord Walton paused and mused; but his sister threw her arm round Arrah Neil, exclaiming, "Oh, dear child! I do rejoice at this indeed!"

"And so do I," said Arrah Neil, with a sigh; "but as I was enjoined strictly not to mention any of the facts but to you, Annie, or to your brother,—the person who told me said, on many accounts,—I hope Captain Barecolt, who has been so kind in all this business, will not mention what he believes to be the truth till he have his lordship's leave to do so."

Captain Barecolt laid his hand upon his heart and made her a low bow; but Lord Walton shook his head with a half-reproachful smile, saying, "When you were a poor unfriended girl, Arrah, you used to call me Charles Walton, and, now you are to become a great lady it seems, you give me no other name but 'my lord.'"

The blood spread warm over Arrah Neil's fair cheek and brow. "Oh no, no!" she exclaimed; "I know not why I did it; but I will call you so no more. You will be always Charles Walton to me, the noble, the good, and true, who fondled me as a child, and protected me in my youth, did not despise me in my poverty, and cheered and consoled me in my distress."

Her face was all glowing, her eyes were full of tears, when Lady Margaret returned; but for a moment or two Lord Walton did not speak. The look, the manner of Arrah Neil

produced emotions in his mind that he did not rightly understand, or rather roused into activity feelings that he did not know were there. On Lady Margaret Langley, too, the poor girl's appearance at that moment seemed to produce a strange effect. She stopped suddenly as she was crossing the room, gazed intently upon her; and then, as the stag-hound rose and walked slowly up to her, she stopped and patted his head, saying, "Ah, Basto! we might well be both mistaken. Come," she continued, turning to her nephew, "supper is ready in the hall; and in the good old fashion of other days we will all take our meal together, and then to rest. For you, my sweet child, whose name I do not yet know—"

"They call me Arrah Neil," replied the girl to whom she addressed herself.

"Well, then, Arrah, I have ordered a chamber for you near my own."

"Nay," said Annie Walton, "Arrah shall share mine; it is not the first time she has done so."

"That is better, perhaps," answered Lady Margaret; "you will doubtless have much to speak of, but I must have my share of her, Annie; for when I look at those eyes, it seems as if twenty sad years were blotted out, and I were in bright days again. But come; the people are waiting for us in the hall, with furious appetites, if I may judge from what I saw of them as I passed through."

Thus saying, she led the way; and in a few moments they were all seated at a long table, the followers of Lord Walton and the men who had accompanied the Earl of Beverley being ranged on either side below the more dignified part of the company.

It was altogether a somewhat curious and interesting scene, as they supped in the old oak-lined hall, with the light flashing upon twelve suits of armour placed between the panels, and showing, seated round, a body of men, scarcely one of whom was without some wound recently received. One had his hand bound up in a napkin, another his arm in a sling, a third had his coat thrown back from his shoulder, having received a pistol-shot in the fleshy part of his breast; another had a deep gash upon his cheek, not very neatly plastered up by the hands of some of Lady Margaret's servants; while Captain Barecolt appeared at the head of the file with a large black patch across his nose.

Not much conversation took place during the first part of the meal, for Lord Walton was grave and thoughtful; and every one at his end of the table, except Captain Barecolt, was too much occupied with busy memories of the past, or deep interest in the present, to be very loquacious.

The persons at the lower part of the board were restrained by respect for those above them from talking in aught but whispers; and Captain Barecolt himself, with that provident disposition which has been remarked in him, always thought it best to secure his full share of the good things of this life while they were going, and to keep his eloquence in reserve for a season of leisure.

The lady of the house, with her two fair guests, rose as soon as the actual meal was over and quitted the hall; and all the inferior persons also retired, with the exception indeed of Captain Barecolt, if he can be included in that class. He, however, though Lord Walton had also risen, remained seated, eyeing a half-empty tankard which stood at his right hand, with an evident dislike to abandon its society while anything remained within its shining sides. Knowing well the habits of this peculiar species of Cavalier, Lord Walton pointed to the tankard, saying, "Go on, captain, you will soon finish it; and then I must see the earl and go to rest, for I depart early to-morrow. But, in the meanwhile, I would fain hear more particularly how you met with our fair Mistress Arrah, and, indeed, how you and Lord Beverley happen to be here at all, for I cannot imagine that you can have fulfilled the mission with which you were charged."

"Faith, my lord," replied the worthy captain, after a deep draught, "our mission was cut wondrous short, as your lordship shall hear;" and he proceeded to give his noble companion a full account of all that had occurred, from Lord Beverley's departure from the court till they found themselves prisoners at Hull.

Lord Walton listened, without making the slightest comment, to the tale with which the reader is already acquainted; but he could not refrain from a smile as Barecolt went on to detail all his proceedings with regard to Sir John Hotham; and as the narrator clearly saw he amused his listener, he dwelt perhaps longer than necessary upon all the particulars. At length, however, growing somewhat impatient for facts, the young nobleman again pointed to the tankard, saying, "Drink, captain, and let me hear of your meeting with my sister's young friend. I see how you obtained your own freedom—what more?"

"Why, you see, my lord," replied Barecolt, "as I hinted to your lordship just before I left the good town of Nottingham, I had obtained a little information, which showed me that Master Dry of Longsoaken had taken pretty Mistress Arrah to Hull, and I had laid a little scheme for setting her free, thinking that I should thereby pleasure your lordship."

"Undoubtedly!" replied Lord Walton gravely; "nothing could give me greater pleasure than to have this young lady freed from the hands of one who combines the characters of hypocrite, cheat, and ruffian in his own person."

"Well, my lord, such being the case," continued Barecolt, "and finding myself suddenly in Hull, I determined to seek even if I did not find; and as the man who was sent with me, partly as my guide, partly as a spy, was walking with me through the town to seek for an inn at which to lodge, I determined, if possible,

to ascertain if Dry was in any of them, and to take up my quarters in the same. He recommended the 'Lion' and the 'Rose,' and half a dozen places; but I thought to myself, 'Dry will not put up at a first-rate victualler's;' and I accordingly fixed upon one which I judged to be the sort of house at which he would stop. In I accordingly went; and, while taking a glass of wine in the bar, who should appear, followed close by the watch, but the worshipful Mr. Dry of Longsoaken, beastly drunk! He was speedily carried to his bed, and from that moment I determined to remain at the 'Swan,' and make use of my advantages. I found the landlady an excellent good woman, and speedily opened a communication with her upon the subject of the young lady. She was a little shy at first, indeed, but I soon brought matters round by telling her that I had been sent especially to Hull by your lordship to set Mistress Arrah free."

"That was wrong," said Lord Walton, somewhat sternly; "however, no matter, as it did no harm. What did you discover there?"

"Why, I found out," continued Captain Barecolt, "that the very inn at which we were was that where the poor young lady had been brought when first she came to England; that her mother was a very beautiful lady at that time, much like herself, but taller; that she died in that house of a terrible fever that was then raging; that Mistress Arrah herself had well-nigh died of it; and that an old man, whom they called Sergeant Neil, was then in attendance upon the two ladies, as a sort of servant, though he afterwards passed as her grandfather, they say."

"He did, he did," answered Lord Walton, musing. "This is a strange story, Captain Barecolt; let me hear more."

"Why, I suspect the young lady knows more than I do, my lord," replied Barecolt, "and the tankard is empty."

"There is more here," answered Lord Walton, pushing over another flagon from the opposite side of the board. "What more did you hear?"

"Why, I instantly went and saw Mistress Arrah herself," continued Barecolt, after having assuaged his thirst, "and found that old Dry had swept Sergeant Neil's house of all his papers at his death, especially some that the old man had told the young lady where to find; and that he now dragged her about with him, treating her sometimes well, sometimes ill, as he was in the humour, pretending to be her guardian, and asking for a Mister O'Donnell, who lives in Hull. From all this, I divined that the old hypocrite had got better information out of the old sergeant's papers than we had, and that he intended to marry the young lady, or perhaps gain possession of her property."

"Marry her!" exclaimed Lord Walton, with a scornful smile curling his lip.

"Well, my lord, I do not know," answered Barecolt; "but, as she is so very beautiful, even such a stockfish as that might think it no unpleasant way of getting hold of her fortune to make her his wife. But, as I was saying, having taken this fancy, I determined to see what papers the old man had with him, and consequently I walked straight into his room, where he lay like a drunken sow, snoring in his bed, and I rummaged his bags till I found all the papers he had with him. I found only one that referred to this business, however, and it was but a string of questions to be asked of this Mister O'Donnell. However, they proved clearly that what the good landlady of the 'Swan' had told was quite true, as your lordship shall see presently."

The worthy captain then went on to tell all that had taken place subsequently, mingling what portion of falsehood with his truth he might think proper, and taking especial care to make whatever advantage fell in his way by accident appear to have been obtained by his own skill and calculation. Lord Walton was not deceived by his representations; nor can he be said to have been aware of his misrepresentations. He took in the general facts, casting away, as is usually the case with men of high mind, the minor circumstances. Thus he was aware that Captain Barecolt had greatly served one in whom he took a deep interest; but the small particulars of that personage's skill and judgment in effecting the object he cared very little about, and gave no attention to them whatever, hearing the details indeed, but without pausing upon them for consideration, and waiting for the principal results.

"We must find means," he said at length, "of having further information from this Master O'Donnell. He is evidently aware of all the facts."

"Ay, and he has made the lady aware of them too, my lord," rejoined Barecolt, emptying the second tankard, "or at least some of them; for when I came up after having lingered behind at the gates for a short time, in order to give the enemies the change, I found him in close conference with her, and the last words he spoke were to bid her tell no one but yourself or your sister."

"So she said, I recollect," replied Lord Walton; "I will hear more from her; and perhaps, Captain Barecolt, if you be not otherwise engaged in the king's service, I may ask you to have the goodness to employ yourself further in this affair."

"That I will do most gladly, my lord," replied Barecolt. "I remember well, when in the year thirty-five I was requested by—"

"Oh, I neither doubt your capacity nor your zeal, my good sir," answered the young nobleman, interrupting the anecdote, "and the reward shall be equal to the service performed. I will now, however, go and converse with my friend, Lord Beverley, for a short time; to-morrow I will talk over the matter with Mistress Arrah Neil; and, as I suppose you will think it fit to hasten over to give an account to his majesty of what has taken place, we by the way can speak of what is further to be done. In the meantime, let me see the paper you mentioned; I should like to think over the contents during the night."

Barecolt put his hand in his pocket, but the moment after he gave a sudden start, and then looked round the table from place to place, as if he were trying to recollect who had sat in each particular seat. Then, turning to Lord Walton, with a look of horror and consternation, he exclaimed, "Diggory Falgate! where is poor, jolly Diggory Falgate?"

"I do not know whom you speak of," replied Lord Walton; "what has he to do with this affair?"

"The paper is in his bundle!" cried Barecolt, with increasing dismay; "and we have left the poor devil outside in the hands of those rascally Roundheads, whom he hates as a cat hates salt."

"But who is he?" demanded Lord Walton; "this is the first time you have mentioned his name."

As Captain Barecolt was about to give a true and particular account of Diggory Falgate, however, William, Lady Margaret's servant, entered the hall, and, addressing the young nobleman, informed him that the Earl of Beverley would be glad to speak with him as soon as he had done supper.

"I will come to him directly," replied Charles Walton, taking a step or two towards the door; and then pausing, he turned again to Barecolt, saying, "As to this friend of yours, I think you had better take any of the people who may be still up, and seek for him with torches as far as the fight continued. The road must be clear by this time, for the adversary suffered much, and would not like the neighbourhood; but you had better have five or six men with you, and firearms. A watch shall be kept in case you need help, and I shall not be in bed for an hour or two. The poor fellow may be lying wounded."

"Oh, I need little help in such cases, my lord," replied Barecolt; "but, as we may have to carry him hither if he be wounded, I will take some men with me and go directly."

While our worthy captain proceeded to execute this resolution, Lord Walton walked on towards the chamber which had been assigned to his wounded friend; but as he passed through the room in which Lady Margaret usually sat, he turned thither for a moment to see whether his sister and fair Arrah Neil had yet retired to rest. He found his aunt alone, however; and in answer to his inquiries she replied, "I have sent them both to bed, Charles. Poor things! they have had much fatigue of body and more of mind. I never leave my book till the house clock strikes one; but that was no reason why I should keep them waking."

"Well, dear Aunt Margaret, I am going to see Francis Beverley, and will return to you ere you retire to rest," said Charles Walton; and, proceeding on his way, he found with some difficulty his friend's room, and went in.

"Charles," said the earl, who was lying with a lamp on the table beside him, and several papers in his hand, which he seemed to have been reading attentively, "I feel that I cannot ride to-morrow, and the time it would take to send a litter hither from York is too valuable to be lost. You must take the first tidings to the king, and I will follow as soon as some conveyance arrives. I will relate to you all that has happened since we parted; but tell his majesty, I beg, that it was no weak idleness which prevented me from hurrying on to give him all the information I possess."

"He knows you too well to imagine such a thing," replied Lord Walton; "but I can shorten your narrative till your arrival at Hull. All your first adventures I have heard from Captain Barecolt."

"And a glorious tale he has made of it, doubtless," said the earl. "However, all that is of little importance in comparison with that which is to follow." He then went on to give an account of his various interviews with Sir John Hotham, of which, as the reader is already acquainted with the particulars, I will give no detail. The result, however, is still to be told, and it was stated by Lord Beverley in few words.

"At length," he said, "I found that the good governor was so tired of his position, so deeply offended with the conduct of the Parliament, so desirous of returning to his duty, and so willing to risk all but his head to restore Hull to the king, that it wanted but some excuse to save his honour to induce him to do all that we can desire. It was finally agreed between us, then, that, if the king would advance against the city and fire but a shot at it, Sir John would capitulate, and deliver that important place into his majesty's hands. There are many minor particulars to be told; but this principal fact should be communicated to the king without the loss of a day, as it may decide his future movements."

"Without the loss of an hour," replied Lord Walton; "for when I left his majesty, he told me that I had barely time to reach this place and return before the army would be in motion. This is an important affair indeed; for the example set by Hull would bring over a dozen other towns; and, even if it did not, the possession of a port in the north is worth any jewel in his crown. I would set off this very moment, but that both men and horses are so much fatigued that we should lose more time by going than by staying for a few hours' repose. To-morrow morning, however, at daybreak, I will set out. I shall not be able to see my sister, indeed; but it is perhaps as well to avoid leave-taking, and you must console her, Francis. Had you not better write to the king?"

"No," answered the earl, "I think not. I have been considering that question while you were away; but, looking to the danger of the roads and the risk of your being intercepted, as well as the peril to Sir John Hotham if such should be the case, it will be more prudent to bear nothing but the tidings by word of mouth."

"I believe you are right," replied Lord

Walton; "and, such being the case, Beverley, I will at once go and prepare for the journey. Having all the facts, I need not disturb you to-morrow morning before I go."

"Perhaps I had better see you," answered the earl, "for something might strike me in the night which I might wish to say."

"Well, then, I will come in," rejoined Lord Walton. "And now, good-night. Sleep if you can, Francis, and let not all the thoughts of this affair disturb your repose."

"I want that quality of a great man, Charles," answered the earl, with a smile. "I cannot cast off the thought of things that have occupied me the moment that action has ceased. A quick imagination is a curse as well as a blessing. In bright days it is a happiness, indeed, but in those of shadow and darkness it but tends to increase the gloom. Good-night, good-night!"

Lord Walton shook his hand and retired, and then, rejoining Lady Margaret, announced to her his intention of setting off at daybreak the next morning. We will not pause upon all the little particulars of their conversation—the discussion which took place as to whether it would be better and kinder for the young nobleman to take leave of his sister or not, or the after arrangements that he made for leaving four of his men behind him to give aid and protection to Lady Margaret and her household, several of her own servants being absent at the time. Before he retired to rest, he wrote a short note to his sister, and another to Arrah Neil, begging her to write the statement which the hurry of his departure prevented him from hearing in person; and then, giving orders for his horses to be saddled by daybreak, he only further paused to inquire whether poor Falgate had been found. Barecolt and his companions, however, had not yet returned; but, while Charles Walton was undressing, the gallant captain made his appearance in the room, and with a woeful face informed him that no trace of the merry painter could be discovered.

"Then he has certainly been taken prisoner," replied Lord Walton, "and we cannot help him. We have more important business in hand, Captain Barecolt, now. By what Lord Beverley tells me, I am induced to return to the king with all speed. I think you had better accompany me, and, if so, remember I shall be in the saddle by daybreak."

"I am with you, my lord," replied Barecolt; "and, as human beings must sleep, I will even go to bed for the present."

"Do so," replied Lord Walton; "I shall follow the same course."

But before he put his resolution into effect, after Captain Barecolt left him, the young nobleman fell into a fit of deep thought, from which he did not rouse himself for nearly an hour. When he did rise from his seat, however, he said to himself in a low, sad voice, "'Tis as well I am going."

Annie Walton slept well, but Arrah Neil was restless and agitated, and after a few hours of disturbed slumber she awoke, and saw the blue, faint light of the first dawn through the curtains of the room. She turned to gaze upon her fair companion, and remarked with a smile the tranquil repose she was enjoying. "Sleep, sleep, sweet lady!" she murmured; "and, oh, may no heartache ever keep your eyes from rest!"

The moment after, she heard the sound of arms and of horses' feet, and rising quietly she approached the window and looked out. The opposite room, which, as we have described it, was destined for a sitting-room, commanded the view at the back of Langley Hall, but the bedroom was turned towards the court and the drawbridge; and as poor Arrah Neil gazed forth from the window, she saw a party of five horsemen mounted, and Lord Walton putting his foot in the stirrup. The next moment he was in the saddle; and, after speaking a few words to his aunt's servant William, who was standing beside his horse, he rode over the drawbridge and at a quick pace pursued the way to York.

"He is gone without my seeing him," murmured Arrah Neil to herself; and then, creeping quietly to bed again, she turned her face to the pillow and deluged it with tears.

CHAPTER XXX.

"Nay, do not drag me so; I will go right willingly, my masters!" cried poor Diggory Falgate. "I was there with them upon compulsion. It is hard to be made prisoner by one's friends as well as by one's enemies."

"Hold thy prating tongue, liar!" replied one of the troopers who were bearing off the painter across the country towards Hull, which lay at about ten miles' distance, the course that the earl and his party had pursued having been rendered very circuitous by the various accidents of the journey. "Hold thy prating tongue, liar, or I will strike thee over the pate! Did we not see thee at their heels, galloping with the best?"

"But no man can say that he saw me draw a sword in their behalf," answered Falgate.

"Because thou hadst no sword to draw," rejoined the man. "And thou mayst be sure that to-morrow morning thou wilt be swinging by the neck in the good town of Hull, for the death of Captain Batten and the rest."

"I killed them not," said Falgate in a deprecatory tone.

"What! wilt thou prate?" rejoined the trooper, striking him in the ribs with the hilt of his sword. But at that moment one who seemed in command rode back from the front, and bade the man forbear.

"Come hither beside me," he said, addressing Falgate, who in the darkness could not see his face, to judge whether it was stern or not. "You are a malignant—deny it not, for it will

not avail you. You are a malignant, and the blood of Christian men has been shed by those who were with you. Your life is forfeit, and there is but one way by which to save it."

"What is that?" asked Falgate. "Life is not like a bad groat, only fit to be cast into the kennel; and I will save mine if I can."

"That is wise," answered the soldier. "You can save it if you will. You have but to tell truly and honestly who they are who were with you, and what was their errand in these parts. You know it right well; therefore deny it not."

"Nay, I do not know, right worshipful sir," replied the painter.

"I am not worshipful," answered the man; "but if thou dost not know, I am sorry, for thou hast lost a chance of life."

"But only hear how I came to be with them," cried poor Falgate. "I met the long-nosed man by chance in Hull; and finding him in godly company, and some of the governor's people with him, I thought there could be no harm in going with him to York, whither business called me."

"But he in the buff coat?" asked the soldier; "who is he?"

"Of him I know less than the other," rejoined the painter; "for he came up with us on the road, as we stopped at a little inn to bait our horses. There was with him then a Colonel Warren, who, after leaving us, returned to Hull with a pious man, one Stumpborough, who had with him a troop of horse—"

"We know all that," replied the soldier gravely. "But, as it is so, you must prepare to die to-morrow. I say not that you lie unto us; it may be that you speak truth; but it is needful in these times that one should die for an example; and as you are a malignant, for your speech proves it, 'tis well you should be the man." Thus saying, he rode on again without giving time for Falgate to answer, and leaving him in the hands of the troopers as before.

The party, however, had suffered such loss that the number was now but small; and the poor painter, who by no means loved the idea of his promised suspension in the morning air of Hull, could hear the buzz of an eager but low-toned conversation going on in front, without being able to distinguish the words. He thought, indeed, that he caught the term "church" frequently repeated; but of that he was not sure. And though with a stout heart he resolved to say nothing, either of what he knew or suspected, it must be confessed he shook a little as he rode along.

At length, after an hour and a half's farther ride, they began to approach the Humber, and the moon shining out showed Falgate scenes which he had often passed through in former days upon journeys of business or of pleasure. Now they came to a village in which was swinging, before a fast-closed house, a sign of his own painting; and now a hamlet in which he had enjoyed many a merry dance; till at length, passing over a long, bare, desolate piece of land, without tree, or hedgerow, or house, or break, running along the water's edge, they perceived upon a slight elevation an old time-worn church, the resort of parishioners from a wide and thinly-populated tract, the old stone monuments and gloomy aisles of which had often filled the somewhat imaginative head of the painter with strange and awful visions when he visited it on the Sunday evening in the decline of the year. At about five hundred yards farther on was a solitary house where the sexton lived; and, stopping suddenly before the gate of the churchyard, the commander of the party bade one of his men ride on and get the key.

"What are they going to do?" thought Falgate. "The profane villains are not going to stable their horses in a church, surely! Well, I shall be glad enough of rest anywhere, for Hull is three miles off, and I do not think my skin would hold out."

While he had been thus reasoning with himself, one of the troopers had got off his horse, and, advancing through the little wicket of the churchyard, tried the door of the church.

"It is open," he cried; "they have left their steeple-house open."

The other man was instantly called back, and Falgate was then ordered to dismount. He observed, however, that the soldiers in general kept their saddles, and he advanced with some trepidation, accompanied by the commander, to the door where the other trooper still stood. There he halted suddenly, however, asking in a lamentable tone,—

"You are not going to leave me here alone all night, surely?"

"Not alone," answered the man; "we will put a guard in the porch to watch you; and you will have full time to prepare your mind for to-morrow morning, and to turn in your head whether you will tell us who your companions were, before the rope is round your neck. You may speak now, if you will."

But Falgate was faithful to the last; and, though he by no means approved of being shut up in the church all night, he repeated that he could not tell, for he did not know.

"Well, then," rejoined his captor, "here you must rest; but think well of the condition of your soul, young man, for nothing will save you if you remain obstinate."

Thus saying, he thrust him into the building and closed the door. The poor painter now heard some conversation without in regard to the key, which, it appeared, was not in the lock; and a consultation was held as to whether it should be sent for; but the voice of the commander was heard at length, saying,—

"Never mind. We have not time to stay. Keep a good watch; that is all that is needed."

"But if he try to escape?" asked the trooper.

"Shoot him through the head with your pistol," answered the other voice. "As well die so as by a cord."

The conversation then ceased, and Falgate heard the sound of horses' feet the next minute marching down the hill. The situation of Diggory Falgate was to himself by no means pleasant, and, indeed, few are the men who would find themselves particularly at their ease, shut up for a whole night within an old church, and with even the probability of death before them for the next morning. Silence, and midnight solitude, and the proximity of graves and shrouds and mouldering clay, are things well calculated to excite the imagination even of the cold and calculating, to damp the warm energies of hope, and open all the sources of terror and superstitious awe within us. How often, in the warm daylight, and in the midst of the gay and busy world, does man, roused for a moment by some accidental circumstance to a conviction of the frail tenure by which life is held, think of death and all that may follow it with no other sensation than a calm melancholy! It is because every object around him, everything that he sees, everything that he hears, and everything that he feels, are so full of life, that he cannot think death near. He sees it but in the dim and misty perspective of future years, with all its grim features softened and indistinct. But when he hears no sound of any living thing, when his eye rests upon nothing moving with the warm energies of animation, when all is as dark as the vault, as silent as the grave,—it is then that, if the thought of death presents itself, it comes near —horribly near. Clearer from the obscurity around, more distinct and tangible from the stillness of all things, death becomes a living being to our fancy, with his icy hand upon our brow, his barbed dart close at our heart. We see him, feel him, hear the dread summons of his charnel voice, and prepare for the extinction of the light within the coffin's narrow bed, the mould and corruption of the tomb.

Poor Falgate had hitherto tried to fancy that the announcement of his fate for the morrow had been merely a threat; but now, when he was left alone in the old church, with no one near him to speak to, with not a sound but the sighing of the night wind through some broken panes in the high casement, his convictions became very different. He felt his way with his hands from pillar to pillar, towards a spot where a thin streak of moonlight crossed the nave, and seated himself sadly upon a bench that he found near. He there sat and tortured himself for half an hour, thinking over all the bold and infamous things the Parliament party had done, and clearly deducing thence what they might probably do in his own case. He loved not the thought of death at all as it now presented itself to his mind; the hero's enthusiasm was gone; he had no desire to be a martyr; but of all sorts of death, that of the cord seemed the worst. And yet, what was to be done? Could he betray the confidence of others, could he flinch from what he conceived to be a duty? No; though he felt a little weakness, he was not the man to do that; and he said again to himself that he would rather die. But still he turned with repugnance from that close grappling with the thought of dying which the scene and the hour forced upon him: he tried to think of something else; he strove to recall the early days when he had last stood in that aisle, and many a boyish prank he had played in years long gone; but the image of death would present itself amidst all, like a skull in a flower garden, and the very sweet ideas that he summoned up to banish it but made it look more terrible.

In the meanwhile, the moon gradually got round, till she poured a fuller flood of light into the building, showing the tombs and old monumental effigies upon the walls and in the aisle; and many a wild legend and village tale came back to Falgate's memory, of ghosts having been seen issuing from the vaults beneath the church, and wandering down even to the gates of Hull. The painter was a firm believer in apparitions of all kinds, and he had often wished, with a sort of foolish bravado, to see a ghost; but now, when, if ever, he was likely to be gratified, he did not quite so much like the realization of his desires. He thought, nevertheless, that he could face one, if one did come; but then arose the sad idea, that he might very soon be one of their shadowy companions himself, wandering for the allotted term beneath "the pale glimpses of the moon."

Suddenly a thought struck him. Might he not, perchance, employ the semblance of that state to facilitate his own escape? Doubtless the man placed to keep guard would not long remain upon his dull watch without closing an eye, after a long day's march and a hard fight. The door was not locked; he could open it and go out; and, could he but so disguise himself as to appear like the inhabitant of another world, if the sentinel did wake, he would most likely be so stupified and alarmed that he would let him pass, or miss his aim if he fired. Falgate remembered the words of the officer as he had retired: "As well die so as by a cord;" and he resolved he would at least make the attempt. A daring and enterprising spirit seized him; he felt he could be a hero in ghostly attire, and the only difficulty was to procure the proper habiliments. At first he thought of making a shift with his own shirt; but then he remembered that the length thereof was somewhat scanty, and he had never heard of ghosts with drapery above their knees.

However, as, when one schoolboy opens a door into a forbidden piece of ground, and puts his head out, a dozen more are sure to follow and hurry him on before them, so the thought of becoming a ghost seemed to bring a thousand other cunning devices with it; at length good Diggory Falgate asked himself if the vestry might not be open, and if a surplice might not be found therein. He determined to ascertain; and, creeping up to the door which he had often seen the parson of the parish pass through, he

lifted the latch, and to his joy found that it was not locked. All, however, was dark within, and the poor painter, entering cautiously, groped about, not knowing well where to seek for that which he wanted. Suddenly his hand struck against something, hanging apparently from a peg in the wall; but he soon ascertained that the texture was not that of linen, and went on, still feeling along the sides of the little room. In a moment after he came to something softer and more pliant, with the cold, glassy feel of linen upon it, and, taking it down, he mentally said, "This must be the surplice." He crept back with it into the moonlight in the church, treading like a ghost, not only in anticipation of the character he was about to assume, but also in palpable terror lest he should call the attention of the guard at the church door by tripping over a mat or stumbling against a bench. The white and snowy garment, however, the emblem of innocence, was there in his hand, and he gazed all over it, inquiring in his own mind how he was to put it on. He knew not the back from the front; he scarcely knew the head from the tail; and seldom has a poor schoolboy gazed at the "ass's bridge," in the dry but reason-giving pages of Euclid, with more utter bewilderment and want of comprehension than Diggory Falgate now stared at the surplice. As he thus stood, addressing mock inquiries to the folds of white linen, he suddenly started, thinking he heard a noise; but, after listening a moment without catching any further sound, he quietly crept up to the great door of the church, and bent both eye and ear to the keyhole, to ascertain whether the sentinel was awake and watching or not.

The only noise that met his ear, when he first applied the latter organ to the task of discovery, was a loud and sonorous snore; and, looking through the aperture, he found, by the light of the moon, which was shining into the porch, that the guard had seated himself on one of the benches at the side of the door, and, with his legs stretched out across the only means of egress, had given way to weariness, and was indulging in a very refreshing sleep, while his horse was seen cropping the grass within the wall of the churchyard.

The poor painter was calculating the chances of being able to pass the outstretched limbs of the sentinel without awakening him, and, screwing his courage to the sticking point,—to use Lady Macbeth's pork-butcherish figure,—when suddenly he was startled and cast into a cold perspiration by hearing a sound at the farther end of the church. All was silent the moment after; but the noise had been so distinct while it lasted that there was no doubting the evidence of his ears; and the only question was, what it could proceed from—was it natural or supernatural? was it accidental or intentional? Diggory Falgate could not at all divine, till at length, encouraged by its cessation, he began to think that he might have left the door of the vestry open, and the wind might have blown down some book. Yet the sound had been sharp as well as heavy—more like the fall of a piece of old iron than that of a volume of homilies, the prayer-book, or the psalter. He determined to see, however; and, sitting down for a moment to gather courage, and to ascertain that the trooper without had not been roused by the noise that had alarmed himself, he listened till, mingled with the beating of his own heart, he heard the comfortable snore of the guard once more. Then, thinking that at at any time he could call the good man to his aid if he encountered ghost or goblin too strong for him, he shuffled himself into the surplice, and with the stealthy step of a cat crept up the nave towards the vestry.

When he was about two-thirds up the church, and was just leaning against a bench to take breath, another sound met his ear. It was that of a deep voice speaking low, and seemed to come almost from below his feet.

"They must be gone now," said the invisible tongue. "All is silent, you hear."

"I do not know," said another, in tones somewhat shriller. "Hush! I thought I heard a noise."

"Pooh! the rustling of the casements with the wind," rejoined the other. "I cannot stay all night; unshade the lantern and let us to work."

If a fragment of superstitious doubt as to the interlocutors of this dialogue being of a ghostly character had lingered in the mind of Diggory Falgate, the words about unshading the lantern removed it completely; and the next instant a faint and misty light was seen issuing from a low narrow doorway, which had apparently been left open on the opposite side of the church, towards the eastern angle.

"Some vagabonds robbing the vaults," thought the painter to himself; "I will see what they are about, at all risks. Perchance I may frighten them, make them run over the sentinel, and escape in the confusion. If he shoots one of them instead of me, it will be no great matter; and of course, if these men are as anxious to get away as I am, we shall make common cause, and be too strong for him. But I will watch for a minute first, and let them be fairly at their work, as they call it, before I show myself."

Thus thinking, with a noiseless step he advanced towards the door leading from the main body of the building to the vaults below, guided by the light, which continued to glimmer faintly up, casting a misty ray upon the communion-table. When he approached the arch, he looked carefully forward at every step; but nothing could he see till he came to the top of the stone stairs, when he perceived a dark lantern, with the shade drawn back, standing on the ground at the bottom. No human beings were visible, however, though he heard a rustling sound in the vault, as if some living creatures were at no great distance; and the next moment there came a sort of gurgling

noise, as if some fluid were poured out of a narrow-necked bottle. An instant after, the first voice he had heard observed, in a pleasant and well-satisfied tone, "That's very good! genuine Nantz, I declare."

"Ay, that it is," answered the second voice; "the stomach requires comfort in such a cold and dismal place as this."

"Oh, 'tis nothing when one is used to it," rejoined the first speaker; "but come, we had better do the business. There stands the coffin. You bring the mallet, and I will take the chisel and bar."

Diggory Falgate did not like their proceedings at all, though he would by no means have objected to a glass of cordial waters himself. But they were evidently about to break open one of the coffins—every word showed it; to violate the sanctity of the grave, to disturb the ashes of the dead; and the poor painter had sufficient refinement of feeling to think that the drinking of intoxicating liquors, while so engaged, was an aggravation of their offence. The collocation of "Genuine Nantz, I declare," with "There stands the coffin," shocked and horrified him; and he paused for a moment to consider, feeling as if it would render him almost a partaker in the sacrilege if he were to descend into the vault. A moment's thought, however, settled this case of conscience; and by the time that he had settled his plan he heard a hollow noise, as if some hard substance had struck against an empty chest.

"Now is the time," he thought; "they are busy at their hellish work."

There stood the lantern on the ground beneath; the men were evidently at some small distance. If he could get possession of the light and shade it, they were at his mercy; and the only difficulty was how to descend the stairs without calling their attention. Recollecting, however, that it was the invariable practice of ghosts, whatever sounds they might produce with any other organs with which they may be endowed, to make no noise with their feet, the good painter stooped down, took off his shoes, and put them in his pockets. Then with a quiet and stealthy step he began the descent, totally unperceived by those who were by this time busily engaged wrenching and tearing some well-fastened woodwork.

Stooping down before he quite reached the bottom of the steps, Diggory Falgate looked into the vault, and immediately perceived two men, both of them somewhat advanced in life—one a thin, tall, puritanical-looking person, dressed in black, raising with a chisel and mallet the lid of a coffin which stood upon the ground. Forty or fifty other coffins, some small and narrow, some large, were within the pale glimpse of the lantern, and the painter's imagination filled up the dark space which the rays did not reach with similar mementoes of mortality. On his left hand, near the foot of the stairs, were four coffins placed in a row, with three others laid crosswise upon them, and all raised two or three feet from the floor by trestles. There was a narrow sort of lane behind, between them and the damp wall, and, taking another step down, he brought himself as far on that side as possible.

Just at that moment one of the men turned a little, so as to bring his profile within the painter's view, and he instantly recognised a face that he had seen at the "Swan" inn in Hull, the day before his expedition with Captain Barecolt and Arrah Neil.

"I'll wager any money it is that old villain, Dry of Longsoaken, whom I have heard them talk so much about," thought Falgate; but he was not suffered to carry his meditations on that subject further, for Mr. Dry, turning his head away again towards his companion, said,—

"I cannot see; get the lantern."

The painter had just time to slip behind the pile of coffins he had observed, and to crouch down, before the other man, after having given another vigorous wrench at the lid, laid down the bar he had in his hands and moved towards the foot of the stairs. The rustle of the surplice seemed to catch his ear, for he stopped for a moment, apparently to listen; but the next instant he advanced again, took up the lantern, looked round with a somewhat nervous stare, and then returned to Mr. Dry.

"Did you not hear a noise?" he asked in a low voice.

Mr. Dry stopped in his proceedings and evidently trembled. Their agitation gave courage to the painter, and, creeping on so as to bring himself nearly on a line with them, he ventured to utter a low groan. Both the culprits started, and gazed around with hair standing on end and teeth chattering.

"Now's the time!" thought Falgate, and, taking two steps farther towards the end of the lane formed by the coffins and the wall, he uttered another groan, followed by a shrill unearthly shriek, and then started up to his full height, as if he were rising from the midst of the pile of mortal dust upon his right.* The rays fell straight upon the white garments and the face of this unexpected apparition, pale and worn as he was by fatigue and fear. Struck with terror and consternation, the limbs of the two men at first refused to move; but when they saw this awful figure advancing straight towards them with another hollow groan, they both darted away, the one crying,—

"Through the church! through the church! It will catch you before you can reach the other door!" and Mr. Dry followed at full speed towards the steps by which Falgate had descended.

Not liking to be left in the vault in the dark, the painter sprang after them with another wild shriek. Fortune favoured him more than skill; for, just as the foremost of the fugitives was mounting the steps, Mr. Dry seized hold of his cloak to stay his trembling limbs; the other, who was the sexton, in the agony of his terror fancied the ghost had caught him, dropped the

lantern, and rushed on, his companion clinging close to him. Falgate instantly picked up the light before it was extinguished, and drew the shade over it; and almost at the same moment he heard the door above banged to by those he was pursuing, and a bolt drawn; for they did not stay to inquire whether spiritual beings are to be stopped by material substances or not.

The painter paused and listened; he heard quick steps beating the pavement above, and then a door opening. The next instant came a loud shout, and then the report of a pistol; then a shout again, then a momentary silence, and lastly the quick galloping of a horse.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Diggory: "they have cleared the way for me, and left me master of the field of battle;" and he drew back the blind from the lantern and looked about him.

CHAPTER XXXI.

LEAVING poor Diggory Falgate to find his way out of the vault as best he might, or, if he rather chose to stay there, to make what discoveries he could, we must return, by the reader's good leave, to some of the more important personages of our tale; premising, however, that, although we have dwelt thus long upon the adventures of the worthy sign-painter, those adventures were by no means without their influence upon the fate of the other personages in this history. We must also pass over a period of several days since last we were at Langley Hall, allowing the reader's imagination to supply the few and quiet changes which time had brought about, no event of any consequence having taken place in the interim.

It was a warm and glowing evening, though autumn had spread his brown mantle over the trees; and, while fair Arrah Neil and Lady Margaret Langley sat in the old lady's usual drawing-room, with the windows open as in midsummer, Annie Walton was seated under a little clump of beeches at the back of Langley Hall, the Earl of Beverley, somewhat recovered from his wound, stretched on the dry grass at her feet.

They were happy enough to enjoy long pauses in conversation; for their mutual love, as the reader has already been given to understand, was known and acknowledged by each; and their minds, starting from one common point, would run on in meditation along paths, separate indeed, but not far distant, and then, like children playing in a meadow, would return to show each other what flowers they had gathered.

"How calm and sweet the evening is!" said the earl, after one of these breaks. "One would hardly fancy the year so far advanced. I love these summer days in autumn, dearest. They often make me look on to after years, and think of the tempered joys and tranquil pleasures of old age, calling up the grand picture of latter life left us by a great Roman orator, when the too vivid sun of youth and manhood has somewhat sunk in the sky, and we have freshness as well as warmth, though not the fervid heat of midsummer."

"I love them too," answered Miss Walton; "and I think that in every season of the year there are days and hours of great beauty and grandeur. Though I like the early summer best, yet I can admire the clear wintry sky, and the dazzling expanse of white that robes the whole earth as if in ermine, and even the autumnal storm with its fierce blast, loaded with sleet and hail and withered leaves. But I was thinking, Francis, of how peaceful all things seem around, and what a horrible and sinful thing it is for men to deform the beautiful earth, and disturb the quiet of all God's creation with wild wars and senseless contests."

"A woman's thought, dear Annie," replied the earl, "and doubtless it *is* sinful; but, alas! the sin is shared amongst so many that it would in any war be difficult to portion it out! 'Tis not alone to be divided amongst those who fight or amongst those who lead; it is not to be laid at the door of those who first take arms or those who follow; it is not to be charged to the apparent aggressor: but every one who, by folly, weakness, passion, prejudice, or hatred, lays the foundation for strife in after years, has a share in the crime. Oh, how many are the causes of war! Deeds often remote by centuries have their part; and always many an act done long before rises up,—like an acorn buried in the ground and springing up into a tree,—and is the seed from which after contentions spring. Even in this very contest in which we are now engaged, though we may see and say who is now right and who is wrong, yet what man can separate the complex threads of the tangled skein of the past, and tell who most contributed to bring about that state which all wise men must regret? Years, long years before this, the foundation was laid in the tyranny of Henry, in the proud sway of Elizabeth, in the weak despotism of James, in the persecution of the Papists of one reign, in that of the Puritans in another; in lavish expenditure, in vicious indulgence, in favouritism and minions, in the craving ambition of some subjects, in the discontented spirit of others, in the interested selfishness, the offended vanity, the mortified pride of thousands; in weak yieldings to unjust demands, in stubborn resistance of just claims, in fond adherence to ancient forms, in an insatiate love of novelty and change: and all this spread through generations, dear Annie, all of which have their part in the result and the responsibility."

"Too wide a range, Francis, for my weak mind to take in," replied the lady; "but I do know it is sad to see a land that once seemed happy overspread with rapine and wrong, and deluged in blood."

"To hear no more the church-bells ringing gaily," said the earl, with a smile, "or to see

the market and the fair deserted. These may indeed seem trivial things; but yet they are amongst those that bring home to our hearts most closely the disruption of all those ties that bind men together in social union."

"But there are in the home of every one more terrible proofs than that of the great evil," answered Miss Walton. "Never to see a friend, a brother, a father, quit our side without the long train of fearful inquiries,—When shall I see him again? Will it be for ever? How shall we meet, and where? Oh, Francis, how many a heart feels this like mine throughout the land! Danger, accident, and death, at other times dim, distant forms that we can hardly see, are now become familiar thoughts, the companions of every fireside; and calm security and smiling hope are banished afar, as if never to return."

"Oh, they will come back, dear Annie!" replied the earl. "This is a world of change. The April day of man's fluctuating passions has never cloud or sunshine long. No sooner does the calm light of peace overspread the sky than storms are seen gathering on the horizon; and no sooner do war and tumult imitate the tempest in destruction and ruin than a glimpse of the blue heaven gleams through the shadow, and gives promise of brighter moments at another hour."

"But that hour is often a lifetime," answered the lady. "We are but at the beginning: shall we ever see the close?"

"Who can say?" rejoined Lord Beverley; "but one thing is certain, Annie. We are under God's will, my beloved. He can lengthen or shorten the time of trial at His pleasure; we ourselves, and all the men with whom or against whom we may act, are but His instruments. We can no more stride beyond the barrier He has fixed than the sea can pass the boundary of sands with which He has surrounded it. Our task is to do that which we conscientiously believe it is our duty to Him to do in the circumstances wherein He has placed us; and we may be sure that, however much we may be mistaken, if such is our object and purpose, the errors of understanding will never be visited on our heads as crimes by Him who knows the capabilities of every creature that He has made, and can judge between intention and execution. God punishes sins and not mistakes, dear girl; He tries the heart as well as the actions, and holds the balance even between each; and though we may suffer in this world for the errors of others or for our own, there is exhaustless compensation in the hand of the Almighty for those who seek to do His will, and those who wilfully disobey it."

"I have learned a lesson on that score from the dear girl within there," replied Miss Walton; and as she spoke she naturally turned her eyes to the room where she knew Arrah Neil was sitting. "What can be the matter?" she continued instantly. "See! Arrah is making eager signs to us to come."

The earl rose slowly and with difficulty; and before he had advanced more than a step or two with Annie Walton, who hastened anxiously to return to the house, Arrah Neil, with her sunny brown hair floating wildly about her face, came running out to meet them.

"Quick, quick, my lord, for pity's sake!" she cried; "there is a large body of men before the drawbridge. The people are holding them in parley; the Lady Margaret says she can conceal you from all eyes if you make haste."

She spoke with breathless eagerness; and Lord Beverley hurried his pace as much as possible, but with perfect calmness, turning with a smile to Annie Walton, and saying,—

"Fresh evils of civil war, Annie; but I fear not the result."

The time occupied in crossing to the house seemed fearfully long to Miss Walton and Arrah Neil; but they found Lady Margaret waiting tranquilly enough at the small door that led into the meadow, and the old lady's only words were,—

"Follow," to the earl; and "Wait in the withdrawing room—they will not let them in till I order it," to her two fair guests. Then, leading the way with a calm step, she conducted Lord Beverley up the same stairs and through the same passages which she had followed with her niece on the first night of her stay at Langley Hall; but, turning a little to the right at the door of Annie Walton's chamber, she brought the earl into a small detached room, which seemed isolated from every other part of the building.

"Here you will be safe," she said.

"I think not, dear Lady Margaret," replied Lord Beverley, with a smile at what he thought her want of experience in such matters.

"We will see," she answered, advancing to the other side of the room, where stood a huge antique fireplace, with a chimney-piece of rich wrought stone. "No moving pictures, no sliding panels here," said Lady Margaret; "but place your hand upon that pillar, my good lord, and push it strongly—more strongly towards the hearth. There," she continued, as the whole mass swung back, displaying an aperture large enough for a man to pass, but not without stooping; "you will find a bolt within which will make it as fast as masonry. The stairs lead you into rooms below, where no one can come without my leave. You shall be supplied with all you want. But hark! On my life, they have let the men in! Quick, my lord, and bolt the door. I will send somebody soon; but I must go down lest those girls make some mistake if questioned."

Lord Beverley entered at once, and, feeling over the face of the stone for the bolt, pushed it home, and made the whole secure. He then paused and listened, waiting patiently for several minutes. At first he could hear no sound in the remote and well-covered place where he was concealed; but at length he caught the noise of voices and steps running hither and thither in

the house. They came near, passed away into other chambers on the left, returned, sounded in the passage, and then in the adjoining room. He could perceive that several men entered, examined the wainscot, tried every panel, moved every article of furniture, and at length shook the mantelpiece and the stone pillars on either side of the chimney; but the bolt held close and fast, and the receding steps showed him that these unwelcome visitors had turned their course elsewhere.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Good Lady Margaret Langley had seen troublous days, and was well fitted by a strong understanding to deal with them; but one of the advantages of misfortune, if I may use so strange a phrase, is, that experience of danger suggests precautions which long prosperity knows not how to take, even in the moment of the greatest need. As soon as she had left the Earl of Beverley, instead of going direct to the part of the house where she heard the voices of her unwished-for visitors, she directed her steps through sundry long and intricate passages, which ultimately led her to a small door communicating with the garden, smiling as she did so at distinguishing the fierce growl of her good dog Basto in the hall, and the querulous tone of an old man calling loudly for some one to remove the hound, showing apparently that some visiting justice was kept at bay by that good sentinel. Passing through the garden and round by the path across the lawn, Lady Margaret approached the windows of her own withdrawing room, just as a party consisting of five militiamen, with the Parliamentary justice of Beverley, entered the chamber in haste; and she heard the justice demand in a sharp tone, addressing Miss Walton and Arrah Neil,—

"Who are you, young women? What are your names?"

The old lady hurried in, to stop anything like an imprudent reply; but she had the satisfaction of hearing her niece answer,—

"Nay, sir; methinks it is for us to ask who are you, and what brings you hither in such rude and intrusive guise."

"Well said, my sweet Annie!" thought Lady Margaret; but entering quickly she presented herself before the justice, whom she knew, exclaiming,—

"Ha, Master Shortcoat! good morning to you. What brings you hither? and who are these men in buff and bandolier? I am not fond of seeing such in my house. We had trouble enough with them or their like a few nights ago."

"Ay, lady, that is what brings us," replied the justice. "I have orders from Hull to inquire into that affair, and to search your house for the bloody-minded malignants here concealed, who slaughtered like lambs a number of godly men even within sight of your door, and then took refuge in Langley Hall. I must search, lady—I must search."

"Search, if you will, from the cellars to the garret," replied Lady Margaret; "but the story told me by those who did take refuge here was very different, Master Shortcoat. They said that, peaceably passing along the country, they were attacked by a body of bloody-minded, factious villains, who slaughtered some of them, and drove the rest in here, where, finding some of their companions waiting for them, they issued forth again to punish the knaves who had assailed them."

"It's all a lie, good woman!" exclaimed an officer of militia. "But who are these girls? for there was a woman amongst them."

"You are a rude companion, sirrah," answered Lady Margaret. "These ladies are of my own family — this one my niece, Mistress Anne Walton; and this my cousin, Mistress Arabella Langley."

"Come, come," said another, interposing; "we are wasting time, while perhaps those we seek may be escaping. It is not women we want, but men. Search the house, Master Justice, with all speed. I will go one way with two or three of the men—go you another with the rest."

"Stay, stay!" said Justice Shortcoat; "you are too quick: we cannot make due inquest if you interrupt us so. Lady, I require to know who were the persons in your house who went forth to assist the malignants on the night of Wednesday last."

"Why, I have told you already, Master Shortcoat. You must be hard of hearing. Did I not say they were friends of theirs who were waiting here for them? In these times, when subjects are governors and servants masters, how can I keep out any one who chooses to come in? That very night one of the men swam the moat, and let down the drawbridge for himself. How am I to stop such things? If I could, I would keep every party out that appeared with more than two, be they who they might. I seek but to live a peaceable life; but you, and others like you, break in at all hours, disturbing my quiet. Out upon you all! Search, search where you will! You can find nothing here but myself and my own people."

"Well, we will search, lady," replied the officer of militia who had spoken before. "Come, worshipful Master Shortcoat—let us not waste more time;" and, seizing him by the arm, he dragged rather than led him away.

The moment he was gone, Lady Margaret whispered in Annie Walton's ear, "Quick, Annie! run to the room where all the maidens sit, and tell them, if asked what mean the clothes in the earl's chamber and the blood upon them, to say that they are those of one who was killed the other night, and that the body was carried away by his comrades. I will go to the men's hall and to the kitchen, and do the same. You hear, sweet Arrah? such must be our tale;" and away the old lady went.

But she found the task of communicating this hint somewhat more difficult than she had expected, for the hall was half full of the Parliamentary militia, and she had to send her servants to different parts of the house, one upon one pretence, and another upon another, before she could find the opportunity of speaking with them in private.

In the meanwhile she heard with a smile the feet of the justice and his companions running through all the rooms and passages of this wide, rambling pile of building, except those which, separated from the rest by stone partitions, and forming a sort of house within the house, could only be discovered either by one already acquainted with some of the several entrances, or by the line and rule of the architect. She had just done instructing her servants, not having omitted, as she thought, one of the household, when feet were heard descending the principal stairs, and the perquisitions were commenced in that wing of the hall in which the room inhabited by the Earl of Beverley was situated.

In a few minutes the justice and one of the militiamen returned, carrying a cloak and a heavy riding-boot, and demanding, with a triumphant laugh, "Where is he to whom these belong?"

"In the grave probably," replied Lady Margaret, with perfect composure. "If you are authorized to take possession of dead men's property, you may keep them; and indeed you have a better right to them than I have, for your people shot him, so that you have only to divide the spoil."

"Do you mean to say, Lady Margaret, that the man is dead?" asked Justice Shortcoat, with a look of some surprise and consternation.

"All the better if he be," exclaimed the officer of militia; "'tis but one malignant the less in the world. But let us hear more, worshipful Master Shortcoat. I don't believe this story. Let us have in the servants one by one—"

"Ay, one by one," said the justice, who was one of the men who may be called Echoes, and who repeat other men's ideas in a very self-satisfied tone. "You see about it, sir, and ensure that there be no collusion."

The whole matter was soon arranged; and Lady Margaret, taking her wonted chair, drew an embroidery-frame towards her through which she passed the needle to and fro with the utmost calmness, while sweet Annie Walton sat with a beating heart beside Arrah Neil, who, with the tranquil fortitude that had now come over her, watched the proceedings of the intruders as if she had been a mere spectator. The magistrate placed himself pompously at the table in the midst; the officer, who had now been joined by two companions with various other articles from the earl's chamber, stood at Master Shortcoat's right hand to prompt him; and then the servants were called in singly, and asked to whom the clothes belonged which had been found.

"To the gentleman who was killed," replied the man, William, who was first examined.

"And where is the corpse?" demanded the officer of militia.

"I do not know," replied the servant; "they took it away with them."

"Was he killed at once, or did he die here?" asked the officer.

"He lingered a little, I believe," answered William.

The justice looked at the officer, and the latter said, "You may go; see him through the hall, Watson."

Another and another servant was called, and all gave the same answers till they came to the maids, who had not been so well or fully instructed by fair Annie Walton as the men had been by her aunt. Their first reply, indeed, was the same—that he was dead; but when they were interrogated as to the time of his death, they hesitated and stumbled a little; but they were generally girls of good sense, and contrived to get out of the scrape by saying that they did not know, as they had not seen him till he was dead; and all agreed that the corpse had been taken away.

At length, however, at the last, appeared the scullion; and Lady Margaret's face for the first time showed some anxiety, as the girl had not been in the kitchen when she visited it, and, to say truth, had been hearing some sweet words from a soldier in the court. When the usual first question was asked her, namely, whom the clothes belonged to, she replied,—

"To the gentleman who was brought in wounded."

"And who died shortly after," said Lady Margaret, fixing her eyes upon her.

"Do not venture to prompt her, lady," said the officer, turning sternly towards her. "Speak, girl, and tell truth. Did he die?"

"I never heard as he died," answered the scullion.

"Do you know where he is now?" asked the justice.

"No, that I don't," replied the girl. "I have not seen him to-day."

Both judge and officer gazed at her with a frowning brow, and demanded, one after the other,—

"Did you see him yesterday?"

Poor Annie Walton's heart fluttered as if it would have broken through her side; but the girl, after a moment's consideration, replied somewhat confusedly,—

"I don't know as I did."

"Then, when did you see him last?" inquired the militiaman.

"I can't tell," answered the scullion. "I don't justly know. I saw him the night he was brought in, for the men laid him down on the floor there, and I saw him through the door chink, just where Basto is lying."

She pointed to the dog as she spoke, and he, with whom she was by no means a favourite, started up with a sharp growl and rushed

towards her. He was checked by his mistress's voice, however; but the girl, uttering a terrified shriek, ran out of the room, and the officers with the justice laid their heads together over the table, conversing for some minutes in a low tone.

At length the worshipful magistrate raised his eyes, and turning to Lady Margaret he said,—

"Madam, it is clear that this is a very dark and mysterious affair; and any one can see with half an eye that you have given shelter and comfort to notorious malignants. It is therefore my unpleasant duty to quarter upon you a guard of twenty men, under this worshipful gentleman, who will take what means he may think proper for discovering the dark practices which clearly have occurred here."

"In this dark, clear case, sir," replied Lady Margaret, with a stiff and haughty air, "will it not be better to furnish them with a general warrant? Its having been pronounced illegal will be no obstacle with those who set all law at defiance. As to quartering those men upon a widow lady, I care little about it, so that I do not see them. Keep them away from the apartments of my family, and you may put them where you like. If they come near me, I will drive them forth with that feather broom. Away with you all, and keep out of my sight, wheresoever you bestow yourselves. Or do you intend to spoil the Egyptians, and take my beef and beer, or my goods and chattels?"

"Though you are uncivil to us, lady," said the officer, who perhaps thought that the comfort of his quarters might depend upon fair words, "we do not intend to be uncivil to you. We will give you no trouble so long as you and your people comport yourselves properly; and in the trust that you will do so, I shall now retire, and fix the rooms for my men as I shall judge expedient, of course not interfering with your accommodation. Come, Master Shortcoat."

"Stay, sir!" said Lady Margaret. "You speak well. Perhaps I was too warm; but all these intrusions into a peaceable household do heat one. I will see that you have all that you want and can desire; I wish to show you no inhospitality;" and she bowed with graceful dignity as the Roundhead party retired.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

NIGHT had succeeded to day, and that day had been an uneasy one; for during the hours of light that remained after the Parliamentary militia had taken possession of Langley Hall, Lady Margaret had in vain endeavoured to find some opportunity of opening one of the several doors which led into the private rooms and passages of the house. Wherever she went she found one or other of the soldiers on the watch, and she became alarmed lest the want of necessary food should, in the earl's weakened state, prove detrimental to his health.

Miss Walton said nothing; but her beautiful eyes were so full of anxious thought, that, whenever they turned upon her aunt, the good old lady felt her heart ache for the painful apprehensions which she knew were in her fair niece's bosom; and as the shades of evening fell, she rang for her servant William, and asked him several questions in a low tone. What his answers were neither Annie Walton nor Arrah Neil could hear for some time; but at length, in reply to some injunction of his mistress, he said aloud, "I will try, my lady, but I do not think it will do. He is a sad, sober man, and when they were eating, shortly after they came he would drink little or nothing."

"Well, give him my message," said Lady Margaret, "and if he will not drink, we must find another means. Warn all the tenants, William, to-morrow early, that they may be wanted; but now go, and see the wine be the best in the cellar."

The man retired, but in a few minutes after he opened the door again, announcing Captain Hargood, and the commander of the small force left at the Hall made his appearance with a ceremonious bow.

"Madam," he said, "I hope you do not put yourself to inconvenience or restraint to ask a stranger to your table who is here against your will, and in some degree against his own."

"Not in the least, Captain Hargood," answered Lady Margaret; "I always have loved and esteemed brave men, whatever be their party; and though, in all that is justifiable, I would never scruple to oppose to the death an enemy, yet where we are not antagonists I would always wish to show courtesy and forget enmity."

"I hope, madam, you will not consider me as an enemy," replied the officer.

"Whoever keeps forcible possession of my fortress," said the old lady, with a smile, "must be so for the time; but let us not speak of unpleasant things—supper must be served;" and, advancing unembarrassed, she rested her hand upon the arm of her unwelcome guest, and led the way with him to the hall.

But the stout Roundhead was not one to lose his active watchfulness by indulging in the pleasures of the table. The wine was excellent, and the servants were always ready to fill for him; but he drank sparingly, and Lady Margaret did not venture to press him, lest her purpose should become apparent, and lead to suspicions beyond.

After partaking lightly of the wine, she rose, and with her two fair companions retired, leaving him with the potent beverage still on the board, in the hope that he might indulge more freely when he was alone. As soon as they were in the withdrawing-room, she explained to Annie Walton and Arrah Neil, in low but earnest tones, the exact position of the room in which was the entrance to the secret passage which she had opened for Lord Beverley, and

the means of making him hear and withdraw the bolt.

"I will send up a basket of food and wine to your chamber, Annie," she said; "and as soon as all seems quiet in the house, you and our dear Arrah go, by the moonlight if you can, to that place, and try to gain admission. If you should fail, or if you should find any one on the watch, come down to me. They have so scattered their men about, that it is well-nigh hopeless before they go to sleep. It would almost seem that they knew whereabouts the doors lie. There is one means, indeed, and that must be taken if all others fail; yet I would fain shrink from it."

"What means is that, dear aunt?" asked Annie Walton.

But the old lady replied that it mattered not; and shortly after they separated, and the two fair girls retired to their chamber. Miss Walton's maids were there ready to aid her in undressing; and, though Annie and her friend had much to say to each other, all private conversation was stayed for the time. Shortly after Lady Margaret's chief woman appeared with a covered basket, set it down, and retired without saying a word; and in a few minutes more Annie sent her maidens to bed, saying that she would sit up for a while, and adding, "Leave me a lamp on that table."

But, now that they had the opportunity of speaking more freely, Arrah Neil and her noble friend could but poorly take advantage of it, so eager were they to watch for the diminution of all sounds in the hall. They did speak, indeed, words of kindly comfort and support; and manifold dreamy reasonings took place on all the events of the day, and their probable consequences; but still they interrupted their speech continually to listen, till all at length seemed profoundly still, and Arrah whispered,—

"Now I think we may go."

"Yet but a moment or two, dear Arrah," replied Miss Walton. "Let them be sound asleep."

In deep silence they remained for about a quarter of an hour, but then Annie herself rose and proposed to go.

"I am grown such a coward, Arrah," she said, "that I would fain perform this task speedily, and fain escape it too."

"'Tis the desire to do it," answered her fair companion, "that creates the fear of failing. But let me go, Annie, if you dread it so much."

"Nay, nay! No hand but mine, for worlds!" exclaimed the young lady. "But come, I am ready; let us go."

Slowly and quietly opening the door, they issued forth into the passages, and, remembering as well as they could Lady Margaret's direction, were making their way towards the room to which she had led the earl, when suddenly, out of a neighbouring chamber, walked the officer of militia, and stood confronting them in the midst of the passage. Annie Walton trembled, and caught poor Arrah's arm to stop her; but her fair companion was more self-possessed, and, whispering, "Come on; show no fear!" she advanced straight towards the officer, saying aloud,—

"Will you have the kindness, sir, to accompany us to the door of Lady Margaret's chamber? We are afraid of meeting some of your men, who might be uncivil."

"Do you not think that Lady Margaret may be asleep by this time?" asked the officer, with a doubtful smile.

"Oh dear, no!" replied Annie Walton, who had gained courage from her fair companion's presence of mind. "She never goes to bed till one or two. Perhaps we may even find her in the withdrawing-room."

"I think not," said the officer; "but we can easily see." And, thus speaking, he led the way down, having made himself thoroughly acquainted with the ordinary passages of the house.

The door of the usual sitting-room was ajar, a light was within, and the officer put in his head. Instantly perceiving Lady Margaret Langley seated reading, and recollecting her threatened vengeance if any one of his band approached her apartments, he said, "I have escorted these two young ladies hither, madam, as they were afraid to come alone."

"I thank you, sir," replied the old lady, laying down the book. "Down, Basto, down! Come hither, Annie. Close the door, my sweet Arrah. I thank you, sir. Good-night. They are foolish, frightened girls; but I will see them back when we have done our evening duties."

The perfect tranquillity of the old lady's manner removed the suspicion which Captain Hargood had certainly entertained; and, closing the door, he retired to the room he had chosen for himself.

As soon as he was gone, Lady Margaret said in a low tone, "So you were stopped, I suppose, by that rascal?"

"Yes, indeed," replied Annie Walton; "we had scarce taken twenty paces when he met us, and I was fool enough to lose all judgment; but this dear girl saved us both."

"Well," rejoined Lady Margaret, "there is but one means, then. I am weak, girls,—very weak,—or I would not have kept the good earl so long in darkness and in hunger for my own foolish thoughts. Come with me;" and, opening the door which led from the right-hand side of the withdrawing-room to her own chamber, she went in, closing it again when they had both passed, and fastening it with a bolt. She then paused for a moment in the midst, gazing down upon the floor with a look of deep sadness, and then approached a large closet, which she opened. It was full of shelves; but, putting her hand upon one of them, Lady Margaret drew it forth, laid it down beside her, and pushed hard against the one below. It instantly receded, with the whole back of the closet, showing the entrance to a room beyond.

"See, but say nothing," whispered the old lady; and while Annie Walton followed with the lamp, she entered before them.

It was a small room fitted up somewhat like a chapel, but hung with tapestry. At the farther end was a table or altar, covered with a linen cloth yellow with age, and having beneath what Annie Walton imagined to be the chalice and plate of the communion. Above, however, hung the picture of a very young woman, whose sweet and radiant look, yet tender and mournful eyes, might well have accorded with a representation of the Blessed Virgin; but the figure was dressed in the fashion of no very remote time; and as soon as Lady Margaret raised her eyes to it, the tears rose in them, and, tottering to one of the large crimson chairs that were ranged along the side, she sank into it and bent her head in silence.

Annie Walton and Arrah Neil stood and gazed upon the picture as if they were both fascinated, but neither spoke; and at length Lady Margaret rose again, saying abruptly, "I am a fool, and will be so no more. This is the chamber of retribution, my sweet Arrah," she continued, approaching the two fair girls, and taking the lamp out of the hand of Miss Walton. "Here for many a year I and one now gone wept and prayed for forgiveness;" and, holding up the lamp towards the picture, she gazed at it with a mournful look. Then, laying her hand upon the edge of the cloth which covered the table, she seemed about to withdraw it, but paused, and her face became almost livid with emotion. "I will do it," she said at length,—"I will do it—but say nothing—ask no question—utter not a word!"

As she spoke, she cast back the cloth; and, lying on the table, which was covered with crimson velvet, appeared a pale and gory human head, severed at the neck. The face was turned up, the eyes were closed, the mouth was partly open, and the fine white teeth were shown. Though pale as ashes, the traces of great beauty remained in the finely chiselled features. The curling lip covered with the dark moustache; the wide, expansive brow, the high forehead, the blue tinge of the eyes shining through the dark-fringed lids,—all showed that in life it must have been the face of as handsome a man as ever had been seen, but over all was the grey shade of death.

Annie Walton started back in terror; but Lady Margaret turned to her sternly and sadly, saying, "Foolish girl! it is but wax. For you it has none of those memories that give it life for me. There—you have seen enough!" and she drew the cloth back again over that sad memento. Then, gazing for a moment again at the picture, the old lady set the lamp down upon the table; and, casting her arms round the fair neck of Arrah Neil, she leaned her eyes upon her shoulder and wept bitterly.

Annie Walton would not intrude upon her aunt's grief, either by asking any questions or by calling to her remembrance the situation of the Earl of Beverley, although, as soon as the first impression of the extraordinary spectacle which had been presented to her had passed away, the state in which her lover had been so long kept naturally occurred to her mind. But Lady Margaret, herself a woman of strong and vigorous character, though somewhat eccentric in her habits of thought, soon roused herself, and, starting up, she wiped the tears from her eyes, exclaiming, "This is not all folly, my child; but yet any grief, if it prevent us from doing our duty, is a weakness and a wrong. Come, we will soon find the earl."

Miss Walton took up the basket; and Lady Margaret, with the light, approached a door on the other side of the room which led to a narrow and very steep staircase; but Arrah Neil paused till the light was nearly gone to gaze at the picture, and when she at length followed, her eyes too were running over with bright drops. A long passage at the top of the stairs conducted them to a door, which Lady Margaret gently opened, exposing a room within, furnished with a chair, a bed, and a small table, by which the earl was sitting, his head resting on his hand.

As may readily be supposed, he was well pleased to see his visitors; for long solitude in darkness and uncertainty, without occupation, will have a depressing effect upon the firmest heart and best regulated mind. The cause of their long absence was soon explained; and, the acceptable stores which they brought being taken from the basket and deposited on the table, though Annie Walton would fain have remained some time to console her lover in his imprisonment, he too strongly felt the danger of her so doing to permit it; and, only petitioning that when any one returned some books might be added to his store, to while away the hours of solitude, he saw them depart, though not without a sigh. No interruption took place on the return of the two young ladies to their room, and the night passed over without any other event deserving of notice.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE household of Lady Margaret Langley was increased, during the day following the adventures related in the last two chapters, by the return of two stout servants, whom she had sent upon various errands to a considerable distance from Langley Hall; and in the evening the steward and his man came back, as they termed it,—though, in truth, they both ordinarily lived in a house and cottage about two miles off,—to the dwelling of the good lady. The hind, too, arrived, and took up his lodging in the house; and the shrewd servant, William, was busy amongst the farmers and tenants, talking with one, whispering with another, winking at a third. Langley Hall in truth became quite a gay place; for, in addition to the militiamen from Beverley, every morning saw five or six good

yeomen, sometimes eight or nine, attending Lady Margaret's orders and directions about farming matters. Captain Hargood felt somewhat uneasy; for these visitors, all stout men and generally armed, became so numerous that he saw it was not at all unlikely that in process of time he might be outnumbered in the Hall. He perceived that, should such be the case, at any unexpected moment he might easily be overpowered, if the disposition which he had at first made of his men continued; for, scattered over that large, rambling mansion, in order to watch what was taking place in every part at once, there were not to be found more than two or three of the militia together at any one given point; and it was by no means an easy or rapid process to gather them from their several quarters into one body; for the stairs and passages, the rooms and ante-rooms, the lobbies and galleries, the halls and corridors, were so intricate and in such number, that it was a good half-hour's march from one end of the house to the other; and the shutting of a door or barricading of a passage might in a moment isolate any one party from the rest. He could not help fancying, too, that Lady Margaret felt the advantage of her position, and that there was something more than chance in this influx of tenantry; and thus the feeling of security with which he had taken possession of Langley Hall soon disappeared, and he became very uneasy indeed.

In after periods of the civil war, when the bold and decided tone of the Parliament had spread to the whole party, and the simple justice or petty commissioner, knowing that any violence against a malignant would receive countenance and applause from those who had the power of the State in their hands, ventured every excess against their enemies, Captain Hargood would have overcome the difficulty at once by marching off Lady Margaret and the principal members of her household to Beverley or Hull. But the Roundhead party, in remote provinces, had not yet acquired full confidence either in its strength or in its leaders; and steps afterwards taken as a matter of course were now not even thought of. His only resource, therefore, was to reinforce his numbers, if possible, and to make such changes in the disposition of his men in the meanwhile as would guard against surprise.

During the hours, then, at which the hall was thronged with the tenants and farmers, he gathered his men together into one part of the house, and there kept them till he found that the visitors who alarmed him were departing. But this was all that Lady Margaret desired; and, the unpleasant espial being removed from about nine in the morning till about one o'clock, ample time was afforded for very easy communication with the Earl of Beverley, both to cheer him by the society of his friends and supply him with all that might be necessary to his comfort.

As only one of the party could venture to be absent at a time, it may easily be supposed that Annie Walton was the person most frequently fixed upon, as she was certainly the one best fitted to console the weary hours of the earl in the strange sort of captivity to which he was reduced; and many and many a happy hour, during the next four days, did the two lovers spend together.

Of the present they had but little to say. No news of any importance reached the Hall, and the brief laugh excited by the success of Lady Margaret's stratagem for driving the militiamen into one particular portion of the house soon passed away. It was upon the past and upon the future, then, that their thoughts and conversation principally turned; but, though the mind of Annie Walton certainly rested more often and more anxiously upon the coming years than upon the past, yet the apprehensions that she entertained regarding them, the too intense interest they excited, and the agitation which the contemplation of all that might take place produced, naturally led her to seek relief in the softened influences of the past; and she would willingly dwell with her lover upon all the thousand little events of early days, showing him, without reserve, all the secrets of her own pure and guileless heart, and seeking playfully and yet eagerly to discover those of his.

Nor did he much strive to conceal them, although there were, of course, some things that he would not say; but whenever he saw that she was deeply interested, and that mystery might create doubts injurious to her peace, he was as frank and free as she was; sporting, perhaps, a little with her curiosity, but always satisfying it in the end. He did not, indeed, amuse himself or her, to use the words of a sweet old song that one time cheered my infancy, by

Tales telling of loves long ago,

although she was curious to know whether the heart, the possession of which she so much valued, had never been given to any but herself; and indeed could hardly believe that, amongst all the scenes through which he had passed, amongst the fair and beautiful with whom he had mingled, and in all the varying events in which he had taken a part, some one had not been found to love and be beloved, by one whom she found it difficult to imagine any woman could behold without feeling the same sensation towards him that she experienced herself.

At first, indeed, she did not venture to question, but merely suggested with playful smiles the confession which she strove to extort. Then, when he spoke of beautiful scenes in other lands, or of bright and happy moments in former days, she would laugh, and ask whether there had not been some one near to give light to the light and add sweet to the sweetness; and he would reply sportively, "Oh, a multitude, dear Annie! I can assure you that in those days every woman was fair to my young eyes, and every smiling jest was full of wit."

But when she pressed him closer still, and

inquired whether, amongst the many, there had not been one brighter than them all who had found means to eclipse the loveliness around and make herself the beloved, the earl would draw her closer to him, and, gazing on the lids of her downcast eyes, would answer, "Nay, Annie, but I must have your confession first. Have you never loved before? Has no one, ere I knew you, brushed off with a touch the bloom of that dear heart before it was ripe for me?"

"Never, never!" she cried. "Never, Francis! I have had no one to love. Little as I have seen of the world, few as were those who have frequented our house since I was a mere girl, it was not likely that I should meet with any who should either care to make themselves agreeable to me or have the power of doing so. I can assure you that, had it not been for my brother Charles, till I met with you I should have thought men very dull things indeed. We had, it is true, more than once a crowd of roystering Cavaliers, and, more frequently still, half a dozen prim Puritans, staying in the house or in the neighbourhood; but the first were all too gay for me, the others all too sad; the one set too fond of their fine clothes and their fine horses, the others too fond of their own selves, for them to care for me or I to care for them. One man, indeed, asked my father for my hand when I was a girl of fifteen; but my father saved me the trouble of saying *no*, by valuing me at too high a price to part with me. But with you, Francis, it is very different: you have mingled with the bright dames of France and the beautiful ones of Italy and Spain; and I cannot even hope that you should have escaped heart-whole, to lay your first affections at the feet of poor Annie Walton, a country girl, well-nigh ignorant of courts, and of all the graces that you must have seen elsewhere."

"I have seen none like her, Annie," said Lord Beverley in a tone of deep earnestness; "and I will tell you in truth and sincerity, I never loved till I did see her. I may have admired; I may have been pleased; but there have been things in my fate and history which came dimly between me and all others, like those glasses which star-gazers use to look upon the sun without having their eyes dazzled; and even, dearest Annie, when that thick veil was over me the most, I was still the gayest, jesting with the light, laughing with the gay, and draining the bowl of pleasure to the dregs, even when the draught was most tasteless to my lips."

"Indeed!" said Annie Walton gravely; "that seems strange to me."

"And yet it is true," replied the earl: "nay, more,—it is common, Annie. Every man has his own secrets in his heart, and each his own way of hiding them,—one in a dark, gloomy pall, one in a gay and glittering veil; and the latter was my case, sweet one. But perchance you have never heard the tale of what happened to my house in older times. My mother's brother was an Irish lord of a high and noble nature—wild, daring, and somewhat rash. For some poor and trifling fault he was pursued, unjustly, I believe,—at all events, with unjust severity,—in courts he did not recognise, to the confiscation of his property. He laughed such laws to scorn, however, defied them to take him from his mountain-holds, and added attainture to the judgment against him; but he had strong enemies even in his native country. Troops were led up through passes that he thought secure, by men who knew them but too well. His castle—for it was a house well fortified—was attacked and stormed, he being absent from it at the time; and my poor sister, a young child I loved most dearly, then but waiting for an opportunity of returning to her own home, perished in the flames, for they burned his dwelling to the ground. He himself was taken on his return, and, with indecent haste and many illegal circumstances, was condemned and executed."

"Good heaven!" cried Annie Walton, a wild fancy suddenly presenting itself to her mind. "Can it be that Arrah Neil is your sister? There are several strange things regarding her, and I may tell you she is not what she seems."

"No," answered Lord Beverley,—"oh no, my beloved, that could not be! My sister would now be seven or eight years older than poor Arrah, and, besides, the body was not so disfigured that it could not be recognised. She died beyond all doubt. In grief and indignation my father and my mother appealed to the king of England, strove to remove my uncle's trial to some more fit and competent tribunal before his sentence was pronounced, showed the evident illegality of many of the proceedings against him, petitioned, prayed—in vain. He died as I have said, and then to remonstrances they added complaints and reproaches, withdrew from the court, and uttered words which were construed into high offences; fines and punishments followed upon those whose hands had aided to uphold the monarch; and in bitter disgust at man's ingratitude, in abhorrence of his falsehood and indignation at his injustice, I quitted England, wandering over many distant lands, and resolving never to return. I sought forgetfulness, Annie; I sought pleasure, amusement—anything which, if it could not take the thorn out of my heart, might at least assuage the pain. But hark! there is the signal that you must return;" and with one brief caress they parted.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ANNIE WALTON, on her return to Lady Margaret's sitting-room, accompanied by Arrah Neil, who had given the signal agreed upon as a notification that longer stay would be dangerous, found her good aunt seated, her head

leaning on her hand, listening to some intelligence brought by her faithful servant William, who stood before her, with his usual well-satisfied and shrewd look, detailing a valuable discovery which he had just made.

"It is indeed so, my lady," he said: "they have corrupted her, there can be no doubt. Give me a Puritan for ploughing with the heifer. I saw the fellow Jones and the girl, with their two heads near together, in the court; and as I was close to the casement, and the casement was open, I drew up against the wall, saying to myself, traitors make eavesdroppers."

"What did they say? what did they say?" demanded Lady Margaret. "We must come to a quick decision, William."

"Why, all I heard, my lady, was that the trullion said to the Roundhead, 'It is quite sure, for I saw her go in myself; and when she had been there for two or three minutes I walked in too, just as if I was going to look for something. There's no other way out of the room to be seen, and yet she was not there. She didn't come out for an hour either, for I watched.' Then the man answered, 'Well, we must wait till to-morrow, when the reinforcements are coming up from Beverley. We shall be enough then to overpower all resistance.'"

"Said he so? said he so?" cried Lady Margaret, with a thoughtful air. "We must contrive means to frustrate them. Quick, William!" she continued after a moment's meditation; "go and keep the people here. Tell the farmers I will give them a supper; and, if you can, contrive to get more to come up. Then let some one go out and gather news in the country; see what's the truth of this report that came last night, of troops marching, and who they are."

The man hastened away to obey her orders, and Miss Walton gazed anxiously in her aunt's face, inquiring,—

"Do you think they have discovered him?"

"They have discovered something, Annie—that is clear," replied Lady Margaret, "and enough to lead them to more; but they shall not have him notwithstanding, even if we should fight for it. I know the house better than they do, and could lead them into many a pretty trap if I liked it. We can get fifteen or sixteen men together, and then they are but twenty. Then there's Basto; he's worth three Roundheads at any time, though he's but an old dog—and all the women besides. Why, you would fight for this good earl, wouldn't you, Annie, my love?—else you are not fit for a soldier's bride. On my life, I should like to see you in a pair of jack-boots!" and the old lady laughed gaily enough, to cheer her fair niece, whose heart was more easily alarmed than her own.

"Could he not escape in the night, dear Lady Margaret?" said Arrah Neil. "I went to walk out by the moonlight last night, and no one noticed me."

"Because you are a woman, dear child," answered Lady Margaret. "He must have a horse, too, for, though his wound is well enough now, he could not walk far. However, it must be thought of if other things should fail. But we must go and hold counsel with this good lord. Well, William, what more?"

"Why, only, my lady, I have been asking Farmer Heathcote about the troops moving, and he says he is sure of it; he saw the men himself. They seem to be Cavaliers, too, and a good troop of them; but that was yesterday evening, and they were then ten miles off."

"That's unfortunate," replied his lady; "for, if we could have given them notice, we might have had help, and it would have been some satisfaction to enclose these rat-catchers in their own trap. However, you go now and watch Madam Maud for the next two hours; never take your eye off her, and be sure she does not come into this part of the house. You two girls stay here—I will be back presently;" and, thus saying, she retired to her own chamber, sought the private passage into the apartments where the earl was concealed, and, passing with a grave look through that which she called the "chamber of atonement," threaded a long and narrow corridor constructed in the wall of the building, and mounted a staircase of no greater width, which led to the sleeping-room of Lord Beverley, where she found him reading one of the books with which she had taken care to supply him.

"Well, my dear lord," she said, "they have found us out, I fear."

"Indeed, Lady Margaret!" replied the earl calmly; "then I suppose the sooner I quit my present quarters the better."

"I don't think so, my lord," replied the old lady: "I am not sure that it will not be wise to have a struggle for it, and that very speedily. We have got fifteen stout men in the house, and you make sixteen. They, with their captain, are twenty-one. I have a good store of arms here, too, and I could bring the people round, or part of them, through these passages to fall upon them in the rear, while the others attacked them in the front."

"No, no, my dear lady," replied the earl, smiling; "that must not be done on any account. In the first place, we might lose the day, and then you and yours, and all that is most dear to me on earth, would be exposed to violence of which I dare not think. The fire of musketry, too, in such a house as this, might lead to terrible disasters; and, besides, whatever were the result, unless Hull fall and the king can hold this part of Yorkshire, you would be obliged to fly from your own dwelling, and give it up as a prey to the Parliamentary soldiery. It must not be thought of. If you can but keep these men from pushing their discoveries further till nightfall, and get me out by the most private way, I will go and take my chance alone. It is the only course, depend upon it."

"Oh, we will keep them at bay," replied Lady Margaret. "They have been quaking for their lives the last three days, and, while my stout yeomen remain in the house, dare not stir one from another for fear of being taken unawares. I have ordered my men to remain all day, and have promised them supper at nightfall; so we are secure till then, and in the meanwhile you may rest safe; for, sooner than they should break in here, I will burn the house about their ears. If you are resolved to go—"

"Quite," replied the earl.

"Then I will despatch one of the young men," replied Lady Margaret, "as if he were going home, to have a horse ready for you on the road to York. He can come back again to help us when it is done. In the meanwhile I will send you food and wine, that you may be strong for your ride; but I must tell you that there is a party of horse out about Market Weighton, said to be Cavaliers, and it were well that you should be upon your guard if you fly that way, lest they should prove daws in peacocks' feathers."

"Nay, that cannot well be," replied the earl. "If I be not much mistaken, the news I sent by Walton will soon bring the king before the gates of Hull. It would not surprise me if these were some of his majesty's own parties, and I will direct my steps towards them with all speed."

Some further conversation took place regarding the arrangements to be made; and it was agreed that, as soon as Lady Margaret thought the earl's escape might be attempted with a probability of success, either she herself or one of her fair companions should visit him and give him notice; and, after all had been thus settled, Lady Margaret, taking her leave of him, returned to the room where she had left her niece and Arrah Neil.

She found them speaking eagerly, poor Arrah's colour somewhat heightened, and Annie Walton's eyes bent down, with dewy drops resting on the lids.

"Nay, but tell my aunt," said Miss Walton. "Indeed, dear Arrah, you should tell her."

"No," replied Arrah Neil, with her own wild eagerness, "I will tell no one;" and then, turning to Lady Margaret, she laid her hand upon her arm, gazing with an appealing look in her face, and saying, "I have a scheme, dear lady—a scheme which Annie opposes; but it is a good scheme too, and she only fears it on account of danger to myself. Now, I fear no danger in a good cause; and I am sure you will trust me—will you not, dear Lady Margaret?"

"That I will, my child," replied Lady Margaret Langley, "and ask no questions either."

"Nay, but hear," cried Annie Walton; "she is always ready to sacrifice herself for others, and if she does not tell you, I will, my dear aunt."

"Nay, nay," replied Lady Margaret; "you will not betray counsel, Annie, I am sure. Let her have her own way. It is right, I will answer for it; and if it be too generous for men, God will repay it. I will trust her."

Annie Walton shook her head; but the conversation dropped there, and the good old lady proceeded to make all her preparations for the execution of her scheme.

The hours went by; the yeomen still remained at the Hall. Captain Hargood continued to act upon the plan which he had previously followed, but showed no slight symptoms of uneasiness at the prolonged occupation of the house by Lady Margaret's tenantry, appearing from time to time with an indifferent and sauntering air, which ill concealed no small degree of apprehension at all that he remarked, and retiring speedily to his men again, without venturing to suffer them to separate for a moment.

The hour of supper came on, and the table in the hall was crowded. Lady Margaret appeared for a moment, and bade her guests make merry; but two of her servants were stationed in the vestibule beyond, which communicated with the stairs and passages that led to the part of the house in possession of the militia, and whenever a step was heard above one of them approached the foot of the staircase and listened, to provide against surprise.

Night fell, and, as soon as it was completely dark, Annie Walton accompanied her aunt to the good dame's own chamber, and, while Lady Margaret herself remained there, proceeded with a lamp through the dark passages in the wall, to give her lover the warning agreed upon.

They might be pardoned if they lingered a moment or two together; but at length, descending with a rapid step, they approached the chamber where Lady Margaret was waiting. As soon as the door opened the old lady held up her finger, saying, "Hush! I heard a noise just now; but I think it is merely those clowns in the hall roaring over their liquor. Let us listen, however."

They paused for a minute or two, but all was quite still.

"It is quiet now," said the earl. "We should hear if any one were in your sitting-room, and I am to go out into the fields by that way, you say."

"Yes, it is all quiet now," said Lady Margaret; and, advancing to the door which led to the withdrawing-room, she opened it quietly but quickly, followed closely by the earl and Annie Walton. No sooner was it open, however, than Lady Margaret stopped with a start; and Annie Walton with a low cry clung to her lover's arm, for the room before them was full of soldiery.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"Ha, ha, ha!" cried Hargood, with a dry, mocking laugh. "So the dead have come to life again! Stand, sir, and give an account of

yourself. Lady, you are a mighty skilful plotter; but we have doubled upon you, and I will not quit this house till I find this bird's nest."

"Run round, Annie," whispered Lady Margaret to her niece, "through the secret chamber, by the passage to the left and the door in the wall, where you will see a bolt. It will lead you to the hall. Bring our men upon them from behind; we will fight for it still."

Miss Walton took a step to obey; but the movement was not unperceived by the captain of the militia, who exclaimed in a loud voice, turning his head slightly towards his men,—

"Cover them with your guns! If any one stirs a step, I order them to fire," he added, addressing the party at the entrance of the room.

But the stout-hearted old lady was not to be daunted; and, motioning the earl back, she suddenly shut to the door, turned the key, and stepped behind the shelter of the wall, drawing Annie with her.

There was a momentary pause, to hear if Captain Hargood would keep his word; but not a gun was fired, and Lady Margaret reiterated her desire that Annie would run round and bring her tenantry from the hall, into the rear of the Roundheads.

"But no," she cried, interrupting herself. "Come with me, Annie. Come with me, my lord. They must be some time breaking in."

"It is useless, I fear, dear lady," said the earl. "They have better information than we imagined, and I think have been reinforced. There seems to me to be more than twenty men, so that most probably your people are disarmed."

"Hark!" cried Annie Walton; "there is a trumpet without! Oh, they have many more with them, you may depend upon it!"

"A trumpet!" cried Lady Margaret, listening, and her withered face assuming a look of joy as she heard the long shrill blast ringing upon the air. "So there is! so there is! Cavaliers to the rescue! This is our dear Arrah's doing. These are king's troops, my lord. No round-headed Puritan ever blew a blast like that."

"On my life, I believe it is true!" cried the earl, approaching the window and looking out. "A party have crossed the stream and are coming over the meadows."

As he spoke, there was a loud murmuring noise in the neighbouring chamber, and then the sound of a blow, as if from an axe, upon the door of the room in which they were. The earl instantly threw open the casement and vaulted out; and the next moment his voice was heard, calling loudly, "Hither, hither!" At the same time, however, the blows upon the door were repeated, and, though made of strong solid oak, it crashed, and one panel gave way.

"Quick, Annie!" cried Lady Margaret; "let us through the other door. We can set them at defiance yet." But, just as they reached it, a still heavier blow of the axe dashed the lock from its fastenings, and the broken door flew back.

At the same moment, however, a man sprang into the open window. It was the Earl of Beverley, but another and another followed. The casement on the right, too, was burst open, and two or three leaped in at a time, casting themselves in the way of the advancing militiamen.

"Down with your arms, traitors!" cried a voice that Miss Walton thought she remembered.

"Back, Annie! Back, my beloved! Away, Lady Margaret! Keep out of the fire!" exclaimed the earl; and, drawing her niece with her, the old lady retired into what she called the "chamber of atonement," pushing the door nearly to.

The next instant a musket was discharged; then came volley after volley, then the clash of swords, and cries, and shouts, and words of command, with every now and then a deadly groan between, while through the chink of the door that was left open crept the pale blue smoke, rolling round with a sulphurous smell, and the blast of the trumpet echoed from without, as if calling up fresh spirits to the fray.

Lady Margaret Langley held her niece's hand firmly in hers, while Annie Walton bent her fair brow upon her old relation's shoulder, and struggled with the tears that would fain have burst forth.

The strife in the neighbouring room seemed to last an age, though in truth its duration was but a few minutes, and then came a pause, not of absolute silence, for the sounds were still various and many, but there was a comparative stillness, and a voice was heard speaking, though the words were indistinct. The moment after some one near exclaimed,—

"Lay down your arms, then, traitors! We will grant no conditions to rebels with arms in their hands. Hie to Major Randal, Barecolt. Tell him to guard well every door, that no one escape. Now, sir, do you surrender?"

Annie Walton recognised her brother's voice, and murmured, "He at least is safe."

"We will surrender upon quarter, sir," answered the voice of Captain Hargood.

"You shall surrender at discretion, or die where you stand," answered Lord Walton. "Make your choice quickly, or we fire!"

Almost as he spoke, there came a dull clang, as of arms grounded suddenly on the wooden floor; and, greatly to the relief of poor Annie Walton's heart, the voice of Lord Beverley was heard exclaiming,—

"Treat them gently, treat them gently! They are prisoners, and must abide his majesty's pleasure."

"Thank God!" said Miss Walton,—"thank God!"

"Hush!" said Lady Margaret. "Let us look out, Annie. There is a smell of burning wood."

As she spoke, she approached the door and opened it. Annie Walton followed close upon her steps, and gazed into the room beyond. It

was a sad and fearful scene. The bed-chamber of Lady Margaret, in which the principal struggle had taken place, was comparatively dark, receiving its only light from the glare of the lamp and sconces in the drawing-room on the other side. The room was well-nigh filled with men; others were seen through the open door, and every sort of attitude into which the human figure can be thrown was displayed amongst them. At the farther end of the table appeared Captain Hargood and some eight or nine of the militia, their arms cast down, and gloomy, sullen despondency upon their faces. Near them lay three or four others, still and motionless; one fallen upon his back, with his arms extended; one upon his face, his limbs doubled up beneath him. A little more in advance was another militiaman, sitting on the ground, supporting himself with one hand upon a chair, while the other was pressed tightly upon his side; and beside Lady Margaret's bed knelt a young Cavalier, his long and fair curling hair streaming down his shoulders, and his face buried in the bed-clothes. Several of the royalist party were stretched upon the ground near; the faces and hands of most of the others were bloody and begrimed with gunpowder; and several were seen in different parts of the room, tying up the wounded limb or stanching the flowing blood.

In the front stood Lord Walton and the Earl of Beverley: the one armed, and with the stern frown of vehement excitement upon his lofty brow; the other with no arms but a sword, and with his fine and speaking countenance animated certainly, but calm and open. Hanging in a thick cloud over the whole were wreaths of smoke, and a stream of a lighter colour was finding its way through the open door, and slowly mingling with that which the discharge of firearms had produced.

The party of the Cavaliers was by far the more numerous, and at the moment when Lady Margaret looked in several of them were advancing to secure the prisoners. Lord Walton was in the act of giving various orders, from which it was apparent that the house was surrounded by a considerable party of the royalist cavalry; but no one seemed to notice, in the interest of the scene before them, the fact that there was, as Lady Margaret had observed, a strong and growing smell of burning wood, or that ever and anon, across the smoke which was finding its way in from the next room, came a fitful flash, unlike the quiet and steady light of the candles.

For a short time even Lady Margaret's attention was withdrawn from what she had remarked to the striking scene before her; but after a moment's pause she exclaimed,—

"Charles, Charles! there is something on fire in the drawing-room."

Lord Walton started and turned round, gave a smile to Annie and his aunt, and then, seeming suddenly to catch the meaning of her words, he directed a look towards the door, and instantly strode forward, passing Captain Hargood and the prisoners, and entered the drawing-room.

The moment that he was actually within that chamber, his voice was heard exclaiming aloud,—

"Here, Wilson! Hardy! Help here! the place is on fire!" and a general rush was made towards the other room, where it was found that some spark or piece of lighted wadding, having fallen upon the low hangings, had set the whole in a flame, which, communicating itself to the old dry panelling and carved cornices, was running round the chamber on all sides.

Every exertion was now made to extinguish the fire. Some of the soldiers were sent, under Lady Margaret's direction, to get buckets from the hall, where they found and released the tenantry and servants, who had been locked in by the militia and secured under a guard. All efforts, however, proved vain. The flames spread from room to room; but little water was to be procured except from the stream, and Lord Walton and the earl soon turned their attention to save the valuable furniture, pictures, and plate.

The scene of confusion that ensued is indescribable; and indeed, to the mind of Annie Walton herself, it all seemed more like a dream than a reality, till she found herself standing in the gardens of the house, her hands clasped in those of Arrah Neil, and old Major Randal saying a few words of somewhat dry but kindly compliment; while Lady Margaret at her side patted the head of her old dog Basto, murmuring, "Let it burn, boy! let it burn! It has lasted its time and seen many a heartache. So let it burn, for the villains have not had their way, and the right has triumphed."

To Annie Walton, however, it was a sad sight. Twice within a few months had she beheld the place where she had made her home a prey to the flames; and, though she was not one to give way to idle superstitions, it seemed as if it were a warning that she was no more to have a fixed abode, and she said to herself with a sigh,—

"Well, I will follow Charles wherever fortune shall lead him. Peace and repose, security and comfort, are gone from the land, and I must share the troubles of the rest."

A little in advance of the spot where she stood, guarded by two of the soldiers of the troop, were a large pile of plate and a number of other valuable articles; and as Miss Walton was thus thinking, her brother approached Lady Margaret at a rapid pace from the house, saying,—

"My dear aunt, I fear it is impossible to save any part of the building. Where shall we send these things for safety?"

"Let the house burn, my boy! let the house burn!" said Lady Margaret. "It is not worth the hair of an honest man's head to save it. Take the pictures, and all the rest of the things but the plate, down to the steward's, and

especially the papers. As to the silver, we will carry it away to the king at York. He may need it more than I shall."

"He is not at York, my dear aunt," replied Lord Walton. "Ere noon to-morrow I trust he will be in Hull. Luckily, we were on our march, and not very far distant from the Hall, when our dear Arrah here found us out and told us of the strait in which you were placed." As he spoke he took Arrah Neil's fair hand and pressed his lips upon it warmly; and Lady Margaret, suddenly laying her hand upon his arm, exclaimed,—

"Ah, Charles, when I am dead you must be her protector!"

"I will," replied Lord Walton; and then repeated still more earnestly, "I will."

Arrah Neil gazed stedfastly in his face, and her beautiful eyes filled with tears.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

It is quite abominable to have left Diggory Falgate for such a length of time in a cold damp vault without anybody to keep him company but rats and mice and such small deer; but yet, dearly beloved reader, it could not be helped without evident injustice to more important personages. Not that Diggory Falgate was an unimportant person, nor that his stay in the vault was unimportant to this history; far from it, as you shall speedily hear. The reader has already perceived that he was a man of action, fond of an enterprise, liking a certain sort of excitement; not always, indeed, quite confident of himself, and consequently exaggerating a little his sayings and doings, in order to keep himself up to the mark.

He drew back the shade of the lantern, then, as we have before said, and looked about. His next step was not quite determined, and it was wise to look about him. It always is wise, indeed, to look about one before one acts; but, nevertheless, the glance that Diggory gave around did not serve to strengthen him in any resolution or guide him in any course of action. On the contrary, it confused his mind and shook his firmness. The first feeling when Mr. Dry and the sexton made their escape from his pursuit, taking him to be a ghostly enemy, was one of triumph; but when he came to examine in what that triumph consisted, he felt induced to exclaim, like Napoleon, "Is this a victory?"

He was master of the field, it was true; the foe had fled; but there he was, left alone, with nothing but coffins, and shrouds, and other remnants of humanity scattered around him. The door, too, was bolted; he had heard them fasten it; the other door they had talked of might be locked, and he might have to remain where he was till some person in the neighbourhood chose to die and be buried, or till hunger, fright, cold, and solitude added his bones to the bones that were mouldering around. He calculated the chances; he entered into the details with painful minuteness; he knew that the parish was large, but very thinly peopled. There might be a funeral once a quarter, but not more, except when some epidemic raged in Hull, and people took a fancy for country lodgings before or after death. Then he thought, with a glimpse of hope, that on Sunday there would be a congregation in the church, and he could make them hear; but Sunday was a long way off, for this was only Wednesday, and Diggory Falgate set himself to compute how long he could hold out. Thursday, Friday, Saturday—three days and a half! He had often fasted two, for very good reasons, but then it was not in a vault; it was not amongst dead corpses; it was under the free sky, with the fresh breath of heaven blowing on his cheek, and beautiful nature refreshing him with bright sights. The case was very different at present, and his knees began to shake at the very thought.

Then, however, he did what he should have done at first; but that imagination, when she gets the bit between her teeth, is such a runaway jade that she carries one through all the ponds and quagmires of possibility in five minutes. He set out in search of the other door, to see whether there was any need of alarming himself at all. He took two steps forward, and then a third; the fourth struck against something that made a sort of creaking sound—something even softer than the skull of a man of fashion; and, holding down the lantern, he perceived the basket of Ezekiel Dry. His heart was instantly revived, and, stooping over it, he drew forth the bottle of genuine Nantz which the worthy Puritan had boasted of, and with a good conscience he put it to his mouth. The contents had certainly been diminished by the original proprietor and his friend; but still there was nearly half a bottle left, and that would, he thought, with prudence and economy, serve to keep him up till he could get help. There was some bread and cheese, too, in the basket, and, the mouthful of spirits having acted speedily with cheering effect, he looked upon himself as provided against the worst contingency; and in a moment after his eye lighted on a crowbar, a mallet, and a chisel, with which he flattered himself he could unbar any door that ever yet was closed.

All Diggory Falgate's speculations, however, were vain, useless, unnecessary, as nine out of ten of all our speculations are. When he walked on, threading the lanes of coffins, till he reached a part of the vault where it was crossed by another under the chancel, there on his right hand stood the door that led into the churchyard, wide open, and moonlight shining in quite pleasantly. All his alarm took flight in a moment, the lion returned to his heart, and after an instant's pause he said to himself, "Hang me if I do not see before I go what these fellows were hunting after!" and with this doughty resolution he walked back, and

began to examine the scene of Mr. Dry's operations.

There stood the coffin on the ground, the lid raised by tearing the screws out of the woodwork, and only holding by one at the end where the feet were placed. It was a very plain coffin; no velvet, no gilding spoke it to be that which contained the dust of high estate or noble birth; but simple black cloth was the covering, and a small lacquered plate upon the lid bore inscribed some letters, which the painter held the lantern to decipher. It was not without difficulty that he did so, and then could make nothing of them, for they were but

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The painter paused and gazed in silence. "There must be something more under this," he said at length, "or that old villain would not have come here to break open the coffin. I wish Captain Barecolt had told me more, for I cannot help thinking that he and that pretty young lady have some interest in this affair. I have a great mind to see what is in the inside: there is but one screw left in; it would be easily taken out."

He stooped and took up the chisel, but then paused again in doubt and hesitation. "Well," he said, "I can put it in again if I find anything. There is no harm in looking;" and, quietly applying the chisel to the purposes of a turnscrew, without venturing to use any such violence as those who preceded him had displayed, he drew out the last remaining screw, and looked with an anxious face at the coffin-lid, with some feelings of awe and reluctance. Then, giving a glance round the vault, he removed the covering and laid it down against the neighbouring pile.

Lifting the lantern, Falgate looked into the last receptacle of what had once been young, and fresh, and beautiful.

There was the dusty shroud, somewhat mouldy, but not decayed; and as the face of the dead was covered with a cloth, none of the ghastly appearances of corruption were visible; but the falling of the drapery of death, the sharp lines and angles that the folds presented, told plainly and solemnly that the flesh had long returned to dust, and that nothing but the bones remained uncrumbled. One thing, however, instantly attracted the poor painter's attention: a piece of parchment, covered with writing, lay upon the breast, and taking it up he read it with care. The words seemed to direct him to a further search, and putting his hand to the left side of the shroud, though with some reluctance, he drew forth a small packet folded up and sealed. Blowing away the dust from it, after a few moments' consideration he wrapped it in the parchment, and put it into his pocket, saying, "If I do not take it, others will, who may make a bad use of it. I will convey it to those who have a right to have it, if God helps me out of this scrape."

Then, replacing the lid of the coffin nearly as he had found it, he ate some of the bread and cheese, applied his lips again to the bottle of Nantz, and, walking to the door, peeped out into the churchyard. All was still and quiet, the moon shining upon the gravestones, and the wind whispering through the old yews; and, stripping off the surplice which he had found in the vestry, Diggory Falgate stole forth into the open air, got over the low wall, and made speed towards some trees that he saw at a distance.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE small town of Beverley was as full as it could hold. It does not, indeed, seem at any time well calculated to hold a great many; but it is wonderful how elastic towns and even houses are when the inhabitants have a good mind to make room for others. It was, or seemed to be, as full as it could hold, however, as I have said, when about noon a body of some three hundred horse, followed at the distance of a quarter of a mile by a mixed troop of gentlemen and ladies, with a small party escorting some thirty-five or forty prisoners and two or three waggons, entered the place and marched up the principal street. A number of gay Cavaliers were lounging about at the doors of inns and private houses; some companies of train-bands were seen in the more open spaces, and guards appeared at the doors of the town-house, from the windows of which several heads were leaning forth, gazing listlessly upon the scene below. All was gay and pleasant confusion; for the party of the Parliament took care to keep out of sight, and the royalists, exulting in the arrival of the king, were doing their best to show a hearty welcome to his court. Though somewhat less than two thousand cavalry, and a small infantry force, consisting entirely of train-bands, with half a dozen light pieces of artillery, certainly did not show much like an army, yet hope and excitement magnified the numbers; and the good townsmen of Beverley, as they reckoned up, with the exaggerating powers of imagination, more noblemen than they had ever seen in the parish before, and calculated the troop which each could bring into the field if he were willing, never doubted that, if the king had been so pleased, he might have brought a much larger host to the siege of Hull, and believed that many more would actually follow.

In this supposition, indeed, they were encouraged by a number of houses being already marked out as quarters for different persons who had not yet appeared. Amongst the rest, a handsome brick building, in a garden, on the

side of Hull, had been assigned to the expected party of Lord Walton; and as soon as the head of the troop I have mentioned appeared, a man who had been waiting by the side of a saddled horse, at the door of the town-house, sprang into the saddle, and, riding up to the commanding officer,—our old friend Major Randal,—informed him of the direction he was to take.

This old officer halted his men to let the party behind come up, and two or three gentlemen on foot advanced and spoke with him for a moment or two, while such exclamations as—"Indeed! burned to the ground, do you say?" "What! Langley Hall burned down? I saw a light over that way as I was marching. About nine, was it not?"—were heard as they conversed.

"Pooh!" cried Randal, as one of the gentlemen, for want of other amusement, asked him to describe all that had taken place; "I am not good at telling stories, my lord. Ask Barecolt there; he has always one ready, and if not, he will make one. But here come Lord Walton and the Earl of Beverley, with the ladies from the Hall, and we must go on. March!"

The troop followed, and on the whole party went to the quarters which had been provided for them; the soldiery billeted in certain alehouses and cottages in the vicinity, and the higher personages in the house which has been mentioned.

The bustle of arrival was soon over; all orders were given, all arrangements made; and the ladies and gentlemen in whom we are most interested were assembled in the hall of the house—a large and handsome room, lined with dark carved oak, and possessing four windows, which looked out into a garden, well arranged according to the taste of that day, and surrounded by high walls.

In the march from Langley Hall, as may be supposed, much had been told to Lord Walton, but it had been confined to the events that had taken place since his departure from York, and there was another subject upon which he was anxious for information. As he stood talking with Lady Margaret, while the Earl of Beverley and Miss Walton gazed forth from one of the windows, the young nobleman's eye fixed upon Arrah Neil, who, seated in a chair at some distance, her look full of deep but tranquil thought, was caressing the large dog, which, from her very first arrival at Langley Hall, had shown so strange a partiality for her.

"Tell me, my dear aunt," said Lord Walton, interrupting what the good lady was saying in respect to a proposed visit to the king,—"tell me what is all this about that sweet girl. Annie says she has a strange tale to relate, and Captain Barecolt has already roused my curiosity. Has anything more been heard since I went to York?"

"Nothing, Charles, nothing," replied Lady Margaret. "A strange tale, did Annie say? I have heard nothing of it, and yet I cannot cast from my mind the belief that if that poor dog could speak he would tell us as strange a tale as one could wish to hear. Oh, those dumb witnesses of all the many acts done, as we think, in secrecy and solitude—if they had but a voice, what dark and fearful things would be trumpeted to the ear! 'Tis as well that they have not. But let us go and ask her;" and, walking up to Arrah, who looked up at her approach, she laid her hand kindly on her shoulder, saying, "Annie has told Charles, dear child, that you have something strange to relate to him. You had better speak soon, my Arrah, for no one can count upon these soldiers for a minute. They go hither and thither like the winds and clouds."

The blood mounted slightly into the cheek of Arrah Neil, and she said, after a slight hesitation, "I must tell him alone, dear Lady Margaret. I would fain tell you too, because I know you would advise and help me well; but they made me promise that I would only tell him and Annie."

"Nay, my child, I seek not to know," replied Lady Margaret; "I have had too many sad secrets in my life, and desire no more. And yet, Arrah—and yet," she added, "there might be a tale for you to tell; but it is a dream—a wild, idle dream: no more of it! Go with him into the gardens, my child, and tell him what you have to say."

Arrah Neil rose timidly, and raised her eyes to Lord Walton's face as he stood beside his aunt; but, grave and somewhat stern as he sometimes seemed to others, to her he was always gentleness itself, and taking her hand he drew her arm through his and led her towards the gardens.

Lady Margaret seated herself where Arrah had been sitting, and, bending down her head over the dog, continued talking to him in a low murmuring voice for some minutes. Annie Walton and the Earl of Beverley remained conversing in the window, and their eyes soon rested upon Lord Walton and Arrah Neil, as they walked up and down one of the broad gravel-walks. The face of the young nobleman was grave and attentive; but from time to time he raised his look to his fair companion's countenance, and seemed to ask some questions. Arrah Neil's gaze was most frequently bent upon the ground, but nevertheless at different periods of their conference she glanced for a single instant eagerly at the face of Charles Walton, as if seeking to discover what impression her story made upon him, and then with downcast eyes again went on with her tale.

Annie Walton felt for her; for there was something in her heart that made her sure the telling of that tale to the ear that heard it would be matter of no light emotion to poor Arrah Neil. She would have given worlds to see her brother smile, to know that he spoke gentle words and kind encouragement; but he turned up and down the walk, again and again, with the same thoughtful air, the same high and lofty bearing—not proud, not harsh, but grave and calm. And yet it was better as it was, for Arrah Neil knew him well and loved him dearly

as he was; and any deviation from his natural character, any softer, any more tender movement, might have agitated her and rendered her incapable of going on with tranquil clearness. At length, however, when it seemed all at an end—the story told as far as she could tell it—the whole truth known as far as she knew it herself—Lord Walton suddenly paused, and, casting his arms suddenly round her who had been the object of his house's bounty, pressed a warm kiss upon her glowing cheek. Then, taking her hand in his, he drew it within his arm again and led her back towards the house, her face crimson and her limbs trembling with deep emotion.

The Earl of Beverley turned to Annie Walton with a smile.

"God's blessing on them," he said, "and on all hearts that love!"

Miss Walton started. "You do not understand it, Francis," she replied.

"Yes, dear one, I do," said her lover; "I have long seen it. I know Charles Walton well, and the share that generous enthusiasm and calm reasoning prudence have in his nature. He has loved rashly, and checked his love. Some great obstacle is gone, and love has now the sceptre. He is not a man to debase that which he loves, or I should have feared for poor Arrah Neil; but he is not one either to sacrifice what he thinks right, even to his heart's dearest affections; and therefore, dear Annie, I have grieved for him. But, my beloved," he added, speaking even lower than before, "between us there is no such barrier as has always existed between them. A period of repose must soon come, and then, surely—"

Annie Walton cast down her eyes and the colour mounted in her cheek; but ere the earl's sentence was concluded Lord Walton and his fair companion re-entered the hall, and she turned towards them without reply. Her lover gently detained her, however, gazing into her face half-reproachfully; and she murmured in a low tone,—

"I am always ready to fulfil my promises."

"Thanks, dear one, thanks!" answered the earl; and, turning to Lady Margaret, he released her hand, seeing that her brother beckoned her towards him.

"You know all she tells me, Annie," said Charles Walton, as his sister joined him and Arrah at the other side of the room; "but this must be kept secret for the present. We must have the further proofs ere we say aught to any one."

"Even to my aunt?" asked his sister.

"Ay, to her more than all," answered Lord Walton; "but I will soon find means to clear up the whole. This man, O'Donnell, must be seen if possible. But here comes a message from his majesty. I trust we shall soon be in Hull, and then we shall have ample means of obtaining all the information that may be required."

The royal officer, as Lord Walton expected, brought him and the Earl of Beverley a summons to the presence of the king, to whom their arrival in the town had been immediately notified; and, hastening to the house, they found the unhappy monarch surrounded by the nobility, who were crowding to his standard. The scene was very different now from that presented by the court at Nottingham. Hope and expectation were in all faces, and even the melancholy countenance of Charles bore the look of satisfaction it so seldom assumed.

Commissioned by Lady Margaret Langley, the first act of Lord Walton was to present to his sovereign all the plate and jewels which had been brought from Langley Hall—an act which was imitated during the civil war by many of the noble families of the day; for loyalty was then a sentiment amongst a great number of the British nation, and attachment to the throne was not a matter of trade and calculation.

"My aunt commissions me to say, sire," the young nobleman continued, "that did her strength or her sex permit, no one would fight more zealously than herself in defence of your throne; but, as she can bring you nought else, she brings you this small offering of good-will, to the value, she esteems it, of about ten thousand pounds, which will at least aid in the maintenance of your troops."

"I accept it as a loan, my lord," replied Charles, "which would be soon repaid if many more of my subjects would show such devoted loyalty. However, as a loan or as a gift it commands my sincere gratitude; and if God should bless my cause, as I trust He will, this is one of the acts that will not be forgotten."

The monarch then turned to other subjects, and with graceful courtesy inquired into the destruction of Langley Hall, and expressed his deep regret that, for attachment to his cause, a lady so far advanced in life as Lady Margaret should have been exposed to such inconvenience, alarm, and danger.

The audience of the two noblemen was long; and to Lord Beverley in particular the king addressed numerous questions, making him repeat over and over again the substance of his conversations with Sir John Hotham, and pondering over his replies, as if seeking to confirm in his own breast the hopes he feared to entertain. At length, however, the monarch put the question plainly to the earl,—

"What is your own sincere opinion, my lord? Will Sir John keep his word?"

"If I must speak plainly, sire," replied the earl, "I can but reply that I think he will if he can: nay, I am sure of it. But I have some doubts as to his power of doing so;" and he proceeded to explain that an evident jealousy was entertained of the governor of Hull by the Parliament; that his own son was in fact merely a spy upon him in the place where he appeared to command; and that before his (Lord Beverley's) departure he had heard of the arrival of several Parliamentary officers, and that others were expected, whose presence in the town might act as a check upon Sir John Hotham,

and prevent him from executing that which he intended.

Such a view of the case gave the king subject for further meditation; and at length he repeated twice,—

"It were much to be wished that through a confidential person we could find some means of holding communication with the governor."

The Earl of Beverley was silent for a moment or two, for he had been dreaming happy dreams, and felt painfully reluctant to put their accomplishment to hazard by placing himself in peril of what seemed almost more terrible than death —a long and indefinite imprisonment. When the king repeated nearly the same words, however, and he felt that their application was to himself, he bowed with a grave and resolute air, saying,—

"If your majesty thinks that my return to Hull can be for your service, I am ready to undertake it."

"It will be greatly for my service, my noble friend," replied Charles; "though it grieves me to place you in a situation of such danger, after all you have suffered in this cause."

"Well, sire," replied the earl, with a sigh, "it will be better for me to set out immediately; for, in order to maintain the character I formerly assumed, I must come upon Hull upon the other side, and it is already late. I fear, moreover, my communications with your majesty must be through York, so that a good deal of inevitable delay will take place."

The further arrangements between the king and his loyal subject were soon made; and, after spending one more brief hour with her he loved, Lord Beverley was again in the saddle, to execute the perilous commission he had undertaken.

In a brief conversation between himself and Lord Walton, the latter besought him to seek out the person named O'Donnell, and to gain from him every information he might possess regarding the early history of Arrah Neil. A note was added in Lord Walton's own hand, begging the Irish merchant to confide fully in the bearer; and, undertaking the commission willingly, the earl rode away towards the banks of the Humber.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

When the Earl of Beverley had ridden on about five miles, musing over no very pleasant anticipations, he thought he heard the sound of a horse's feet coming at full speed, and turned round to look. He himself was riding fast, but he now beheld a single horseman spurring on still faster; and, supposing that the personage who appeared might be some messenger sent after him, with further directions from the king, he drew in his rein and suffered him to ride up.

"Ha, Captain Barecolt!" he exclaimed, as soon as the other came near. "Is anything the matter? have you any message from his majesty?"

"None, my lord," replied Barecolt; "but, having heard of your expedition, with a hint that as I had accompanied you before I might do so again, I lost no time in following; but I was obliged to stop a while to change my dress and put on Captain Jersval."

"This is very rash," said the earl, after a moment's thought,—"very rash indeed, my good friend. You have been seen by so many in your own character that you have no chance of remaining undiscovered."

"Nor your lordship either," answered Barecolt.

"You do not understand the matter you speak of, sir," replied the earl. "Even if I am discovered, it may affect my personal safety, but not the king's service; whereas, if you are recognised as one of his majesty's officers in my company, it may entirely frustrate the objects of my journey. You forget, sir, that the remains of Captain Batten's troops are in Hull, and—"

"The remains of Captain Batten's troops are at Boston, my lord," answered Barecolt. "So much have I learned in Beverley. Sir John Hotham would not receive them, saying that he had no need of cavalry, and that, threatened as he was with siege, they would but eat up his provisions. I know my phiz is a remarkable phiz; but you forget that the beauty thereof has been spoiled by this accursed cut over the nose; and, besides, the very object of my going is to make a very formal complaint to Sir John Hotham of the conduct of Captain Batten in attacking me and my friends,—amongst whom I shall take care not to specify your lordship,—and against one Cornet Stumpborough for stopping me. Do not fear, my lord, but that I will extricate myself; and if you have any qualms about taking me with you, why, I can easily go in at another gate, and be ready to help you at any moment."

"Well, we will see," answered Lord Beverley; "we will see. I will think over it by the way;" and, entering into conversation with his companion, he rode on. The various subjects discussed between the noble earl and our renowned friend might not, perhaps, be very interesting to the reader; for, although the dauntless captain at various times approached the subject of those wonderful and surpassing exploits which he had performed during preceding periods of his history, and the recital of which could not fail to excite the admiration and attention of any one possessing common powers of imagination, yet his cruel companion harshly checked him in all such digressions, and forced him to confine his narrative to the precise sorts and kinds of information which he himself desired to obtain. Thus we shall pass over all that took place till the two gentlemen approached within about a mile and a half of the town of Hull, when they perceived a small

body of cavalry, apparently reconnoitring the place.

"Let us spur on as fast as possible, my lord," said Captain Barecolt, as soon as he perceived this little force.

But the earl, who had by this time determined that it might be as well that the worthy captain should enter the town with him, though apparently only as a chance companion of the way, and who moreover judged at once that the body which they saw was merely a party of the king's troops examining the fortifications of Hull, replied in a quiet tone, "There is no need for any such speed, my good sir. Those are friends."

"The more reason, my lord, why we should seem to think them enemies," replied Captain Barecolt, who never neglected any opportunity of a *ruse*.

"You are right, you are right," captain," replied the earl, "and are indeed a great master of stratagem."

Thus saying, he spurred his horse into a gallop, and at that pace pursued his way towards the gates. The natural propensity which every creature has to follow another who runs away from it caused half a dozen of the cavaliers to gallop after the two apparent fugitives; but the earl and his companion had a start of some distance, and when they arrived at the gates were about two hundred yards before their pursuers. The whole of this proceeding was seen from the walls, upon which a considerable number of the citizens were assembled; and a few musket-shots were fired upon the party of Cavaliers, as soon as the two gentlemen were under cover. The fire did not injure any one, indeed; but it had the effect of inducing the chasing party to halt and retreat very speedily, and, the gates being opened, the Earl of Beverley rode in, followed by Barecolt, with their horses panting from the quick pace at which they had come.

All these circumstances were sufficient indications of hostility towards the royalist party to satisfy the officers of the train-bands at the gates; and with very slight inspection of their passes, the earl and his companion were suffered to ride on into the town; but, separating from his noble companion at the corner of the first street, Captain Barecolt rode away towards the "Swan," with instructions from the earl to seek out Mr. O'Donnell, and to make arrangements with him for a meeting on the following day.

In the meanwhile, the earl rode on towards the house of the governor, and, dismounting in the court, demanded with a foreign accent, as before, to speak with Sir John Hotham. The personage to whom he addressed himself was one of the serving-men of that day, known by the general term of "blue-bottles;" but, unfortunately, as it turned out, he was attached to the person of Colonel Hotham, and carried the earl's message to him immediately, without any communication with the governor.

After Lord Beverley had been kept waiting about five minutes in the hall, while several persons passed to and fro, and examined him more curiously than was at all pleasant to him, the serving-man reappeared, saying, "Be so good as to follow me, sir;" and led the young nobleman through several long passages, to a small gloomy room on the ground floor, where he found Colonel Hotham standing by a table, his brow heavy and his eyes bent upon the door. He inclined his head slightly as the earl entered, and said, without asking him to be seated, "Be so good, sir, as to explain your business to me. Sir John Hotham, my father, is too ill to receive you, and I am entrusted with his functions during his indisposition."

"Your pardon, sir," replied the earl calmly, though the meeting was by no means satisfactory to him, and he remarked that the serving-man remained at the door, while the tramp of feet was heard in the passage beyond. "My business is with Sir John Hotham alone, and if he be ill I must wait till he has recovered, for I can communicate with no one but himself."

"You refuse then?" rejoined Colonel Hotham, with a heavy frown and a sharp tone,—"you refuse? If so, I shall know what to suppose."

"Really, sir, I know not what you may think fit to suppose," answered Lord Beverley; "but very straightforwardly and simply I do refuse to communicate business concerning Sir John Hotham to any one but himself."

"Then, sir, it is clear you came hither as a spy," said Colonel Hotham, "and you shall be dealt with as such."

The Earl of Beverley smiled, and, producing the pass he had received from the governor of Hull, put it in the hands of the Parliamentary officer, saying, "That mistake is easily corrected. Here is my pass in due form, under your father's hand and seal."

Colonel Hotham gazed at it with an angry look; and at the same moment the door by which the young nobleman had been introduced opened, and a party of four or five of the train-bands entered, with a prisoner between the two foremost. Lord Beverley turned round at the noise of their feet, and, somewhat to his consternation, beheld in the captive no other than good Diggory Falgate. Had it been Barecolt, he would have counted upon his wit and discretion; but the poor painter had displayed no traits, during the earl's short journey with him, which could at all reassure him, so he expected every moment to hear him claim his acquaintance. But Falgate showed better judgment than was expected; and Colonel Hotham, after staring at the pass for a moment or two, with a good deal of heat but some indecision in his countenance, suddenly seemed to take his resolution, and tore the paper in pieces, saying,—

"This is all folly and nonsense! A pass under a feigned name is invalid."

"Sir, you have committed an act of gross injustice!" exclaimed the earl indignantly;

"and some day, sooner than you think, you may have to answer for it."

"Indeed!" cried the Parliamentarian, with a sneer. "Well, sir, I shall be ready to answer for my acts when needful. See that you be prepared to answer for yours by to-morrow morning. Let loose that fellow!" he continued, turning to the guard; "I can find nothing against him—he is a citizen, it seems; and convey this worthy person to the strong room. Put a sentry over him, and send Captain Marden to me. Take him away, take him away!"

"And what are we to do with this 'un?" asked one of the soldiers.

"Let him loose, fool!" replied Colonel Hotham, waving his hand, and the earl was removed in custody of the party, giving a significant glance to Falgate as he passed. The painter returned it, but said nothing; and Lord Beverley was led along to a small, close room, with one high grated window, where the heavy iron-plated door was closed upon him, locked, and barred.

The earl seated himself on the only stool, rested his elbow on the table and his head upon his hand, while the struggle between strong resolution and painful anticipations went on in his mind for nearly half an hour. His was a heart not easily daunted—well fitted by high principles and a calm and equal temper to endure the rougher and more painful things of life, and to encounter the perils and disasters of a troublous epoch better than lighter and gayer characters and less thoughtful minds. Nevertheless, he could not but feel the bitter disappointment which but too frequently follows on the indulgence of bright and high hopes in this our earthly career. He almost blamed himself for the joyful dreams which he had suffered to rest in his imagination while standing with sweet Annie Walton at the window of the house in Beverley; and his thoughts ran back from those dear moments into earlier days, recalling every bright spot in the past, thinking of enjoyments gone and pleasures fled away, with a deep and sad consciousness of the transitory nature of every earthly good. Memory is the true "Old Mortality" of the heart, wandering sadly through the scenes of the past, and refreshing the tombstones of joys gone for ever.

As he thus sat, the light began to fade away and night to fall over the earth; but ere it was quite dark he heard footsteps without, and a voice speaking low to the guard at his door. The conversation ceased, but there was no noise of receding steps, and the earl thought, "They are watching how I bear it. They shall know nothing from that. I will sing;" and, folding his arms upon his chest, he raised his eyes to the faint spot of light that still appeared through the high window, and sang, to a plaintive air of the time, some lines composed towards the end of the preceding reign, perhaps by some victim to the coarse tyranny of James I.

"Life's brighter part has passed away;
The dark remains behind:
The autumn brown rests on the earth;
Loud howls the wintry wind.

But stedfast hope and faith sincere
Shall still afford their light:
While these remain, this mortal gloom
Cannot be wholly night.

The summer flowers that once were here
Have faded from the eye;
The merle has ceased to cheer the shade,
The lark to wake the sky.

Green leaves have fallen from the trees,
Dark clouds are overhead;
And withered things, beneath my feet,
Rustle where'er I tread.

But yet I know there is a land
Where all that's lost on earth
Revives to blossom and to bloom
With undecaying birth.

Thus stedfast hope and faith sincere
Shall still afford me light,
Till other suns shall dissipate
The gloom of mortal night."

CHAPTER XL.

WHILE such misadventures had been the lot of the Earl of Beverley, Captain Barecolt had ridden on unopposed and peaceably to the "Swan" inn. He was in some apprehension, indeed, lest he should encounter worthy Mr. Dry of Longsoaken at the house of good Mrs. White; but his mind was prepared to meet any emergency, and therefore he would not be turned from his course by the fear of "any Dry that ever yet was born." Alighting then at the door, he threw the rein of his horse over a hook provided for that especial purpose, and then, mounting the steps, looked in through the panes of glass in the door, which, to say the truth, afforded him no very clear insight into the passage beyond, as each separate square, being manufactured in a somewhat rude fashion, was furnished with a thick green knot or bump in the centre, which greatly impeded the view. All seemed clear, however, and marvellously silent; and, having carried his inspection as far as he judged necessary, the renowned captain opened the door and walked in. As soon as he did so, he perceived the good landlady seated in her little glass-case, alone, and busily engaged in hemming a wimple for her own proper person. She raised her eyes, as usual, at the sound of the opening door, and her face lighted up at the sight of the long limbs that presented themselves in a manner which showed the illustrious commander that no danger was to be apprehended. Approaching, then, with a gallant air, Captain Barecolt unceremoniously entered the parlour and saluted the fair hostess, who expressed herself right glad to see him, asking him a thousand questions about "the dear young lady and her adventures on the road."

"All in good time, Mrs. White—all in good time," answered Captain Barecolt. "To-night, God willing, I will give you a true and par-

ticular account of all that has happened since last we met; but now I have other things to think of. In the first place, my mouth is as dry as a sick dog's nose, and I would fain have a chopin of something to moisten it."

"That you shall, captain, in a minute," replied the landlady. "You look dusty and tired, as if you had ridden hard."

"And so I am, sweet hostess," answered Barecolt; "and the dust is not more on my garments than between my teeth. My tongue is as parched as a bowl of split peas. Do you not hear it rattle? But do not go yourself for the wine, Mrs. White. Transfer that function to one of your nymphs, and listen to me."

"La, captain! I have no nymphs," answered the landlady, half offended; but our hero waved his hand, saying,—

"Well, your maidens then, Mrs. White. Call Sally, and then answer me two or three questions; but first send some one to stable my horse, which is at the door, and, being a modest beast, may as well be removed from the lewd gaze of the townsfolk."

All was performed according to his command; and when Mrs. White returned, Captain Barecolt proceeded, after a deep draught, to put his questions.

"First and foremost, Mrs. White," he said, "what of old Dry?"

"Lord, sir, he is up-stairs, sick in bed!" replied Mrs. White.

"There let him lie, and be the bed on him, white-livered regenade!" said Captain Barecolt. "Then he did not discover that you had aided and abetted in the escape of our fair demoiselle?"

"Oh, not a whit!" replied the landlady. "He was in a mighty rage, to be sure, at first, and he had search made, and a great fuss; but it all ended in nothing, and I managed slily, pretending to help with all my might; so that he grew quite fond and familiar—the nasty old worm! Howsomever, he went out of the gates one day, leaving all his things here, and what happened I don't know; but he came back the next morning, as dull and as dirty-looking as a mixen, took to his bed directly, and has had a doctor at him ever since. I think something must have frightened him sadly, for he has been constantly whining and praying, and the doctor said he had had a turn; but he is much better to-day."

"So far so well, Mrs. White," said Barecolt; "but we must now look to other matters. Do you know aught about Mr. O'Donnell? for, if possible, I must see him to-night."

"I should think you would find him, sir," answered the hostess, "for he keeps himself a great deal at home just now. These are sad times in Hull, sir. There is great suspicion about; and every one whom they fancy to be what they call a malignant is pointed at and watched night and day; and even a poor widow woman like me they cannot help looking after, as if I were a regiment of soldiers; so that customers are afraid to come."

"Well, what of O'Donnell? what of O'Donnell?" demanded Captain Barecolt. "What has this to do with him, my good hostess?"

"Why, bless you, captain! don't you know that people say he is a Papist?" exclaimed Mrs. White; "and so they are likely to be more sharp upon him than any one else; that is to say, not the governor, who is very fond of him, people say, because he supplies him with Dantzic and other strong waters better than he can get at home; but since Sir John has been ill of the gout, the colonel, his son, rules everything here in Hull; and a hard rule is his for every one but Roundheads. They may do as they like; some men may lie in bed and sleep, whilst others must get up early in the morning."

All this was news to Captain Barecolt, and news of a very unpleasant character, which made him ponder deeply for several minutes. Being of an active and inquiring turn of mind, he had not left his leisure time unemployed since he quitted Hull; and partly by no very definite hints, sewn together by surmises, and partly by open avowals and accidental conversations, he had been led to the conclusion that some very intimate communication had been opened between Sir John Hotham and the Earl of Beverley, which the illness of the former and the new state of things in the town might sadly derange. He longed eagerly to gain some intelligence of the proceedings of his noble fellow-traveller; and though he had a sufficient portion of the free companion in his character to act upon his own judgment, with very little deference for the commands he received, when it suited his own purpose, yet he had also sufficient of the old soldier in him to obey orders punctually when he could do no better. He therefore resolved to set out for O'Donnell's house at once, though he could not bring his mind to do so without draining another can; and, while the worthy landlady went to draw it with her own fair hands, he sat pondering over what was to be done next, with no inconsiderable misgivings in regard to the termination of their expedition. At one time, indeed, he thought of cutting the whole matter very short, walking to the governor's house, demanding to see Colonel Hotham, running him through the body with his Toledo, and, with the assistance of the more loyal inhabitants, taking possession of the town in the king's name. It seemed to the eyes of imagination an exploit worthy of a Barecolt; but reflection suggested to him various little objections, which made him abandon his scheme, though he did it with reluctance. The vision of becoming governor of Hull—a post which the king, he thought, could never refuse to grant him, if he took the city with his own right hand—was just fading away from his mind, when the outer door of the inn was thrown vehemently open, and some one entered the passage with a quick and agitated step. Captain Barecolt looked up, and gazed forth from Mrs. White's glass-case,

at the same time laying his hand upon his sword, for he was full of desperate and sanguinary thoughts. In a moment, however, his countenance lighted up, and exclaiming, "Ah, Diggory Falgate! honest Diggory Falgate! Something may perhaps be done now—his knowledge of the place and the people may aid us at this pinch, and my hand shall execute what his information suggests," he opened the door, and went out to meet the poor painter, extending his hand to him in friendly guise.

Diggory Falgate started back as if he had seen an apparition; but the next moment he grasped Barecolt's hand, and exclaimed,—

"This is lucky indeed! Who would have thought to see you here, captain? But listen to me. I have got a story to tell you that will make your hair stand on end;—two, indeed, but one first, for that presses; and if something is not done immediately, the earl is a dead man!"

"What earl?" demanded Barecolt in horror and consternation.

"Why, our earl, to be sure!" replied Falgate, walking on into Mrs. White's *sanctum sanctorum*. "The Earl of Beverley, no other; and that Saracen of a colonel will have him shot to-morrow morning, as sure as I'm a living man, if something is not done to-night to prevent it!"

"I'll cut his throat first!" exclaimed Barecolt, half drawing his sword. "But he dare not—he dare not, Master Falgate. 'Tis all nonsense."

"He shot two men yesterday morning by the water-side," replied Falgate. "Didn't he, Mrs. White?"

The latter words were addressed to the worthy landlady, just as she returned with a fresh chopin; and while Captain Barecolt drained it down at one single indignant draught, she confirmed the poor painter's account, saying,—

"Ay, that he did, the bloodthirsty brute! and better men than himself, too."

"What's to be done now?" asked Barecolt. "The only way will be to go and put him to death at once."

"You will only get yourself killed, and do no good," exclaimed the painter and landlady together; and then Falgate, proceeding alone, went on to add, "There is but one way to help the noble lord, captain, if we can but arrive at it, and that is, to get some one to tell Sir John Hotham himself. He'd never suffer all this to go on if he knew it; and it is only since he fell ill the day before yesterday morning that his son dared to go on so."

"I'll write him a note," said Barecolt.

"Phoo, that will never do!" replied the painter; "unless you can get some one to deliver it to Sir John himself."

"I am talking without guide, indeed," said the gallant captain, who began to feel that his nonsense was a little too gross even for the intellects of the landlady and the painter. "I do not yet know the whole circumstances. Pray, Master Falgate, have the goodness to relate all you know, and how you know it; and then I will decide upon my plan from the intelligence I receive. Be so good as to avoid superfluous particulars, and yet be sufficiently minute in your details to afford me a distinct knowledge of the facts."

Assuming a grave and sententious look of wisdom, he sat with his hands folded upon his knees, while Diggory Falgate went on to inform his auditors that he had been arrested while entering the town three days before, and placed in the custody of a body of the train-bands, with some of whom he was personally acquainted and on very friendly terms. He had remained in terror of his life under their guard till that evening, receiving accounts from time to time of the wrath and fury which Colonel Hotham was exercising upon the unfortunate Cavaliers of the place, and employing all the interest he could make to obtain his own liberation. That afternoon he had been brought in, he said, not knowing whether the next word was to be life or death, when, to his surprise and grief, he beheld the earl in the presence of the governor's son. He then related all the particulars which he had witnessed, and a new consultation took place, which bade fair to have no end, when suddenly the worthy hostess exclaimed,—

"Mr. O'Donnell's the man! He can do it. He can do it, I tell you, when no one else can."

"Do what?" exclaimed Captain Barecolt. "Prithee, my excellent lady, what can he do?"

"Why, get in to speak with Sir John Hotham," rejoined the worthy landlady, "and tell him all about it."

"Then, as I said before," exclaimed the renowned captain, "I will go to him this minute. Come along, Falgate—you shall go with me, for there's no time to be lost."

"That there isn't," replied Diggory Falgate. "I'm your man, captain."

And away they went, begging Mrs. White not to go to bed till they returned.

CHAPTER XLI.

It was nearly dark when the renowned Captain Barecolt and Diggory Falgate issued forth into the streets of Hull, and silence, almost solitude, had fallen over the town, for the people of that good city were ever particularly attentive to the hour of supper, which was now approaching. Captain Barecolt then ventured to give his companion a familiar and patronizing slap on the shoulder, saying,—

"Ah, Diggory Falgate! honest Diggory Falgate! I never thought to see thee again in the land of the living."

"I certainly thought," replied the painter in a grave tone, "that I was on the high road to the land of the dead. But it was not fair of you, captain, upon my life, to leave me outside

in the hands of those men! Why, they talked of hanging me without benefit of clergy."

"Fair!" cried Barecolt indignantly. "How could I help it, Diggory? Did I not work more wonders than a man to save all of the party? Did I not kill six Roundheads with my own hand? Did I not swim the moat, open the gates, fight in the front, protect the rear, kill captain, disperse the troopers, and effect the retreat of my party with the loss of none but you, my poor old Diggory? What more could man do? You were but as a cannon, a falconet, a saker, which we were obliged to leave in the hands of the enemy; nor was it discovered for some time that you were not with us. When it was discovered, too, what did I do? Did I not issue forth, and, thinking that you might be lying covered with honourable wounds in some foul ditch by the roadside, did I not search for you for miles around the field of battle?"

"No! did you, though?" said Diggory Falgate. "Well, that was kind, captain."

"Nay, did I not pursue the search till after midnight?" continued Barecolt. "Ask Lord Walton; ask the noble earl. But now that I have found you, worthy Diggory, I would fain hear how you contrived to escape from the hands of the Philistines. You are not exactly a Samson, Diggory, and I should have thought they would have bound you with bands you could not break."

"Hush!" said the painter; "here is some one coming."

The person who approached was merely a labouring man, who had been detained somewhat late at his work, and he passed on without speaking; but the pause thus obtained in the conversation between Captain Barecolt and Diggory Falgate afforded the latter time for a little reflection. It had been his purpose to communicate to his companion the whole of his adventures, and what he had discovered in the church on the hill; but as he pondered on the matter this design was altered. A conviction had gradually impressed itself upon his mind, since first he had become acquainted with the grandiloquent Captain Barecolt, that the great warrior was in the habit of attributing to himself the actions and discoveries of others, or at all events of taking more than his due share of credit for anything in which he had part; and, as Falgate seldom had an opportunity of distinguishing himself in any way, except by painting strange faces, coats of arms, or wonderful beasts upon signboards, he wisely judged that it would be expedient not to let slip any part of the occasion which, as he thought, now presented itself.

When Captain Barecolt, therefore, returned to the charge, and required a detail of all his adventures, Falgate gave him such an account as was perfectly satisfactory to his interrogator, and which, moreover, had the advantage of being true, though that very important item in the Old Bailey oath, "the whole truth," was not exactly stated. He related how he had been carried off by the Roundhead party; how he had been questioned touching the gentlemen with whom he had been lately consorting; how he had refused stoutly to answer, and had been threatened with death; how he had been shut up in the old church, and left there under a guard.

There, however, the minute exactitude of the painter's statement halted, and he merely added that, finding the door leading from the church into the vaults open, he had escaped by that means of exit; and, after hiding for some time in the neighbourhood, had heard that the troop which had taken him had been sent to Boston, upon which he ventured to return to Hull.

For his faithful discretion Captain Barecolt bestowed upon him high commendation, declared that some day he would be a great man if he would but learn to ride, and offered to be himself his instructor in that elegant art. By the time that the praises of the worthy officer came to an end, however, they were approaching the out-of-the-way spot at which the dwelling of Mr. O'Donnell was situated; but in attempting to approach the water-side they were turned back by a sentinel, who, on being asked how they were to get to the house they wanted to visit, replied, they must go to the back door if it had one.

Luckily, Diggory Falgate was acquainted with the street in which that back door was situated, and to it they accordingly went, pulled the ring of a bell, and produced the slow appearance of the tidy old woman whom Barecolt had seen before. In reply to his inquiries for Mr. O'Donnell, however, on this occasion, she asserted boldly that he was out; but the worthy captain, whose senses, as the reader knows, were generally on the alert, finished the sentence for her by saying—

"Out of tobacco, do you mean, madam? Good faith! if he smokes away at the rate he is now doing in the parlour, he may well consume a quintal in a short space. Go in, my good lady, and tell him that a gentleman is here who bears him news of old Sergeant Neil's granddaughter."

The poor woman was confounded at the worthy captain's quickness; and, too well accustomed to the vapour of tobacco to smell it herself, could not divine how the visitor had discovered that her master was smoking in the parlour, unless he had looked through a crack in the window. Without more ado, then, she retreated, leaving the strangers in possession of the passage; and in a moment after Mr. O'Donnell's head was thrust out of a door at the farther end, taking a view of his two visitors.

"Oh, come in, come in!" he said at length, as he recognised Barecolt. "Whom have you got there with you? Come in. Ah, painter! is that you?"

Without replying to his various questions, Barecolt and Falgate walked on into his little room, which they found cloudy with smoke,

while a huge jug, emitting the steam of hot water, kept company with a large black bottle, with the cork half out, which apparently contained a stronger fluid. O'Donnell shut the door carefully, and then at once began to interrogate Barecolt in regard to Arrah Neil, asking how she had fared on the journey, whether she had found Lord Walton and his sister, and where she actually was.

During the progress of these questions, which were put with great rapidity, Falgate sat silent, but noted attentively every word that was said, and marked the name of Lord Walton particularly in his memory, as apparently the chief friend of the young lady in whose escape he had assisted.

"She got off well, though it was through a hailstorm of dangers, Master O'Donnell," replied Barecolt in a quick, hurried tone. "She has joined Lord Walton and his sister, and is now in Beverley. Ask no more questions at present; but listen, and you shall have further information concerning poor Arrah to-morrow, God willing. At present we have other things to think of—business of life and death, Master O'Donnell."

"Ah, devil fly away with it!" cried the Irishman; "that is always the way. Nothing but business of life and death now-a-days. A plain man can't drive a plain trade quietly without being teased about business of life and death. But I will have nothing to do with it, I tell you. I am a peaceable, well-disposed man, who hates secrets and abominates business of life and death. There, take some Geneva and water, if you will. It is better than all the business in the world. Run and get some drinking-cups, Master Painter."

Falgate, who seemed to have been in the house before, did as he was directed; and as soon as his back was turned O'Donnell demanded,—

"What is this business? One cannot speak before your companion. He is a rattle-pated, silly fellow."

"But a very faithful one," answered Barecolt, doing the poor painter justice; "and he knows all about this affair already. But the matter is shortly this, my good friend:—A noble gentleman is here in Hull, having business with Sir John Hotham, and charged, moreover, by Lord Walton to speak with you concerning Mistress Arrah Neil. He is my particular friend; and while he went on to the governor's house I went to the 'Swan,' requested by him to see you and fix a meeting for to-morrow morning. However, when he arrives at Sir John Hotham's, he finds no one but his son, Sir John being very ill—"

"Ah, by ——! here's a pretty affair!" cried O'Donnell. "Very ill Sir John is not. He has got the gout in one foot and both hands, and is as cross as the yards of a ship; but his son takes all upon himself, and a base business he makes of it. What more? what more?"

"Why, the son causes this noble gentleman to be arrested immediately for a spy, tears his pass to pieces, will not let him see the governor, and threatens to shoot him to-morrow morning."

"And so he will, to be sure!" cried O'Donnell. "But what's to be done? How, in the fiend's name, can I help you? I'll not meddle with it—not a whit! I shall get shot some day myself if I don't mind."

As he was speaking, Diggory Falgate returned with two drinking-cups; and, without waiting for Barecolt's reply, he tapped O'Donnell on the shoulder, saying,—

"I'll tell you how you can help us, Master O'Donnell. Nothing so easy in life, and no danger to yourself either, though you are not a fellow to fear that if there were. All that is wanted is to let the governor know what is going on, and he'll soon stop the colonel's doings; for the pass which that wild beast tore was in his own handwriting; and it will be an eternal blot upon his honour—worse than a black bend sinister on the shield of his arms—if any harm happens to the earl after giving him that."

"The earl!" said O'Donnell. "Oh, ho! He is an earl, is he?"

"What have you said, you fool?" cried Barecolt, turning angrily upon Falgate; but the painter, though he turned somewhat red, put the best face he could upon it, saying,—

"Well, it's a slip of the tongue, captain; but it can't be helped, and you know you can trust him."

"Ay, ay! trust me, sure enough," answered the Irishman. "But how am I to do anything in this?" and, leaning his head upon his hand, he mused, while Barecolt mixed himself some Geneva and hot water, not particularly potent of the latter; and Falgate stood gazing at the master of the house, as if waiting for him to speak further.

"I'll tell you what you can do, Master O'Donnell," said the painter at length, laying his hand upon the other's arm; "you can put on your hat and cloak, go down to Sir John Hotham, and ask to speak with him for a moment about his gout. We know he will see you, for Mrs. White told us all about it."

"And if you have a snug little bottle of cordial waters under your arm, you are sure to get in," added Barecolt. "Come, come, Master O'Donnell; do not hesitate. There is no time to be lost."

"On my life, that's a pretty joke!" cried O'Donnell, starting up; "that I am to go and put my neck in peril for a man I never saw in my life. I tell you, I'll have nothing to do with it. It's a bad case; and if they shoot him, they must."

In vain, to all appearance, were the eloquence of Barecolt and the arguments of the painter. The best they could obtain from O'Donnell was a vague and unsatisfactory reply, that he would go on the morrow, or that he would see about it. He asked, nevertheless, a number of questions, as if he felt some interest in the affair,

which for nearly half an hour had the effect of inducing his two visitors to believe that their entreaties would ultimately prove effectual; but at length he suddenly turned the conversation to another subject, and once more inquired of Arrah Neil; and Barecolt, rising, wished him good-night in a sullen and disappointed tone, saying that, as he would have no hand in it, some one else must be found who would undertake the task which he declined.

As soon as the mighty captain issued forth into the street, however, he burst into a laugh, much to Falgate's surprise. But Barecolt laughed again, saying, "He will do it, Master Falgate! He will do it, take my word for it. He is a cunning old chap, that Master O'Donnell, and he will not let us know what he is going to do; but he'll go."

"I don't think it, Captain Barecolt, I don't think it," replied Falgate sadly; "and we cannot trust the good earl's safety to such a chance."

"I don't intend to trust to any chance at all, Diggory Falgate," answered Barecolt in one of his supreme tones. "You do not suppose an officer of my experience will rest satisfied without clear knowledge of what he is about? Draw back with me, Master Falgate. Go you under the shadow of that entry, where you can see his door in front. I will post myself by that penthouse, where I command both streets. He cannot escape us then, and we will give him twenty minutes. But if he comes forth, say not a word, move not a finger; rest as quiet as one of the door nails till he has gone on, and then come and join me."

Not five of the twenty minutes which Captain Barecolt had allowed for the issuing forth of Mr. O'Donnell had elapsed when the door of his house opened, and a tall figure appeared, which, turning back its head, said aloud, "Turn the lock, Dorothy," and then took its way up the street without observing either of the two watchers.

Diggory Falgate was soon by Barecolt's side, and they followed together upon the steps of the worthy Irishman, till they saw him approach the governor's house and enter the court; after which they again ensconced themselves under a gateway in order to obtain the means of judging, by the duration of O'Donnell's stay, whether he was admitted to the presence of Sir John Hotham or not. Ten minutes, a quarter of an hour, half an hour passed, and, O'Donnell not having appeared when the clock struck ten, Barecolt and his companion, satisfied that their end was so far accomplished, made the best of their way back to the "Swan." The cautious captain, however, to make assurance doubly sure, directed Falgate to proceed once more to the merchant's house at break of day and to question him closely in regard to the result of his visit; after which, having communicated to Mrs. White what success they had achieved, and received her opinion that Master O'Donnell would leave no stone unturned to effect their object, they sat down to a good supper which she had prepared for them in the room where Mr. Dry had dined with Arrah Neil, and enjoyed themselves for half an hour.

At the end of that time, Falgate, pronouncing himself tired, left Captain Barecolt with the flagon (which he did not propose to quit for another hour), and retired, taking care to close the door after him. His course, however, did not lie straight to bed; for, finding the worthy landlady locking up her spoons and ladles in her little parlour, he joined her there, and entered into conversation with her in a low and confidential tone. Their conference lasted a considerable time, and was carried on apparently with some reluctance by Mrs. White at first, but gradually became animated on her part also; and at length, when Falgate asked her, "You are quite sure she was buried there, and that what I tell you was on her coffin?"

"I'll take my oath of it," she replied; "I'll give it under my hand if you like."

"I wish you would, Mrs. White," answered the painter; and, receiving her promise that it should be done on the following day, he retired to bed.

Before we close this somewhat long chapter, it may be necessary to trace to a certain point the proceedings of our worthy friend O'Donnell; but we will do so very briefly. Having passed the sentinel in the court of the governor's house, he approached a small door at the side and knocked for admission. A servant appeared almost immediately; but, far from asking directly to speak with Sir John Hotham, he said, "Ah, Master Wilson! is Oliver within? I want a chat with him."

"Walk in, Master O'Donnell," replied the man, "and I will seek for him. He was with Sir John a moment ago."

O'Donnell wasted no more words, but entered in silence, and, after having been kept for a minute or two in the dark passage, he was joined by Oliver, the governor's body-servant, as he was called, with a light. The two shook hands with great good-will, and Master Oliver drew his Irish friend into a little room on the left, where immediately O'Donnell produced two large, flat-sided, long-necked bottles from under his cloak, and, setting one down on the table, he said, "That's for you, Noll, and this is some gout-cordial for the governor, which will soon send all his ailments away."

"God grant it!" replied the man; "for he is in a devil of a humour. Shall I take it to him, Master O'Donnell? Many thanks for the good stuff!"

"Welcome, welcome!" replied his companion; "but you must get me speech of Sir John this very night, for I have got a dozen bottles of cinnamon, such as you never tasted in your days, and a gentleman in the town wants them. So I promised to give him an answer before I went to bed, but thought it only dutiful to talk to the governor about them first, in case he should like any."

"Ah, he'll talk about that," replied the servant, "though he won't talk of anything else! Come up with me to his door, and we'll soon see if he'll speak with you. Bring your bottle with you. That's as good as a pass."

"Better sometimes," replied O'Donnell drily; and, following the servant up-stairs and into the better part of the house, he was kept for a moment or two in the corridor, and then admitted into the presence of Sir John Hotham.

CHAPTER XLII.

DAY dawned at length into the dark and lonely prison of the Earl of Beverley—the bright warm day, clear and beautiful, and rosy with the hue of the rising sun. A long ray of light streamed through the high window and painted the opposite wall; then slowly descending, as the orb rose higher in the heaven, rested on the graceful figure and the rich curling hair of the captive, as he still sat at the table, but fast asleep, with his head now bent down on his folded arms. The quiet sunshine did not wake him, for he had watched, with anxious thoughts for his only companions, through the greater part of the night; and not till about an hour before morning had slumber fallen upon him. But he was not destined long to know repose; for shortly after dawn a voice was heard in the room, saying, "Is there any one below?"

The sound but not the sense caught his ear; and, starting up, he gazed round the room. All was vacant, however, and he thought he had been dreaming, when suddenly the question was repeated:—

"Is there any one below?"

It seemed to come from the chimney; and, approaching, he replied aloud,—

"Yes! Who speaks?"

"Who are you? what is your name?" demanded the voice; but, though the tones seemed not unfamiliar to Lord Beverley's ear, he could not of course venture to give his real name to a person he did not see; and he replied,—

"That is nothing to any one. Who is he that talks to me?"

"My name is Ashburnham," replied the person, who seemed speaking from some room above; "a prisoner like yourself, if you be one."

"I am indeed, Ashburnham," answered the earl. "I will not utter my name, lest there should be other ears listening; but I am he whom you joined going to France, and who was taken with you."

"Bad luck indeed!" said Colonel Ashburnham. "Hotham has lied, then, for he told me you were gone."

"He spoke truth there," answered the earl; "but, as ill fortune would have it, I returned last night on business, and was arrested by his son, who tore my pass, and vows he will try me as a spy."

"Ay, a curse fall upon him!" cried the other voice. "He respects no rules of honour or courtesy, and, since his father fell ill, has put me in close confinement. If Hotham could know, he would treat you better; but I cannot help you, for I am locked in here."

"Hush!" cried the earl; "here are steps coming."

The next moment the key was turned in the lock, the bar taken down, and two soldiers appeared. In a dull and indifferent tone, as if he were bidding the prisoner come to the morning meal, one of the men told Lord Beverley to follow to the colonel's council; and obeying, with very little hope that anything he could say would change the stern purpose of the Parliamentary officer, the earl was led along the passage to what seemed a dining-hall on the same floor, in which he found Colonel Hotham seated at a table, with four inferior officers round him. Two wore the garb of the train-bands, the others seemed strangers to the city; for when the prisoners entered they were asking some questions concerning the fortifications. His appearance, however, instantly drew their eyes upon himself; and, walking with a firm step to the end of the table, he gazed calmly over them, scanning the countenance of each of those who seemed assembled to judge him, not at all abashed by the somewhat fierce stare with which one or two of them regarded him.

Colonel Hotham had in general chosen his men well. The two Londoners he had long known as very unscrupulous and fiery zealots in the cause of the Parliament; and Captain Marden, one of the officers of the train-bands, whom he had called to his aid, had made himself somewhat remarkable on several occasions by his gloomy fierceness of disposition. He had commanded the party by whom the two unfortunate men mentioned by Falgate had been put to death, and he had seemed only the more morose and dogged after the horrid scene in which he had borne a part. The fourth officer was known as a religious enthusiast, a preacher in one of the conventicles of the city, and, as was generally supposed, as wild and unsparing as the rest, so that Colonel Hotham entertained no doubt that his purposes towards the prisoner would receive the sanction of these men's authority, without scruple or hesitation on their part.

After pausing for a moment, while the earl stood at the end of the table as we have described, the Parliamentary commander demanded in a sharp tone,—

"What is your name?"

"Not knowing that you have any authority to ask it," replied the earl, with perfect calmness, "I shall, most undoubtedly, refuse to answer."

"That will serve you little, sir," said one of the men from London; "for, if you do refuse,

the court will proceed to try you without further ceremony."

"What court?" demanded the earl. "I see five persons sitting round a table, but no court."

"This, sir, is a summary court-martial," replied Colonel Hotham, "called to try a person accused of entering a garrison town as a spy."

"With a pass from the governor," added Lord Beverley.

"But that pass, we have every reason to believe," replied Colonel Hotham, "was obtained by a false representation of your name and quality, and as such was invalid."

"That point will be easily established," replied the earl, "by calling the governor himself. I maintain that he gave it to me with full knowledge of my person; and I therefore require that he be called to testify as to the validity of the pass which you, sir, most dishonourably and dishonestly tore to pieces last night."

"The governor is too ill, sir, to give his evidence," said one of the officers from London.

"If, gentlemen, your purpose is to commit a cold, deliberate murder," said the earl, "you may do it without all this ceremony. I am in your hands, have no power to resist you, and no means of obtaining justice; but I will not further your views by recognising this as a court, which is in fact none at all. If Sir John Hotham is too ill to attend, delay the inquiry till he is better. I stand upon the safe-conduct which I received from him; and if you violate it you are murderers, and not men of honour."

"Had he a pass?" demanded the preacher officer of the train-bands, turning gloomily to Colonel Hotham.

"He had, but under a feigned name," replied Hotham.

"What proof have you?" demanded the enthusiast. "Remember, sir, 'whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed!' If you bring not your father to testify, how can we know that this safe-conduct was wrongly obtained?"

Colonel Hotham's cheek turned red, for he loved not such opposition; and he paused for a moment ere he replied, feeling that he was angry, and fearing that he might commit himself.

"I think," he answered at length, in a tone so soft that it betrayed the struggle to keep down his passion,—"I think that we can prove that it was obtained under a false name by other witnesses, without disturbing my father, which might be dangerous;" and then, turning to the two guards who remained at the door, he said, "Where is the other prisoner? Let him be brought in. Has the other man been summoned, who is said to know something of these persons?"

"Yes, colonel," replied the man to whom he spoke; "they are both without there—one in one room and the other in another."

"Bring in the prisoner first," said Colonel Hotham; "we will confront them together, gentlemen."

A pause ensued for the space of about two minutes, during which no one spoke except one of the officers of the train-bands, who said a few words to the other in a low voice, and then the door opened; and, turning round his head, the earl, as he had apprehended, beheld the renowned Captain Barecolt marched in amongst some soldiers. As it was not the first time that the worthy officer had found himself in such an unpleasant position, he showed himself very little disturbed by his situation, and walked up to the end of the table with a bold countenance, smoothing down his moustaches, and drawing his beard to a point between his fingers, as if he had not had time to complete his toilet ere he was brought from the inn.

The cool self-sufficiency of his air seemed to move the wrath of Colonel Hotham, who instantly addressed him, saying,—

"What is your name, fellow?"

"I be not your fellow, sair," replied Barecolt boldly, "and am not so call. My name vere Captain Jersval, for your service, gentlemen."

"And now speak out, and speak the truth," continued the colonel, while Barecolt bowed ceremoniously round the table; "leave your mumming, sir, and answer. Who is this person, with whom you entered the town yesterday evening? Answer truly, for your life depends upon it."

"Begar, it vere one very difficult thing for me to tell," replied Barecolt in the same unconcerned tone. "First, sair, it cannot alvay be easy to tell who one be oneself, and much more uneasy to tell who de oder man be."

"What does the fool mean?" demanded one of the Roundhead officers; "not always easy to tell who you are yourself! What do you mean, man?"

"Vhy, sair," replied Barecolt, with an agreeable laugh, "one day, not so very long time ago, I met vid one saucy man who to my face—to my very beard, sair—swear I vas one oder man but myself. He swore I vere not Jersval, but Barecole—one Capitaine Barecole, a very great man in dese parts—a famous man, I hear."

"Cease this foolery, sir," cried Colonel Hotham, "and answer my question directly, or prepare to walk out to the water-gate and receive a volley! Who is the person, I say, now standing beside you?"

"*Pardi!* how de devil should I know?" rejoined Barecolt, with some heat of manner; "I have seen him twice, dat is all; once aboard de sheep vere he was very seek, and once I meet him just half a league out of de gate. Ve vere chase hard by a party of vat you call Cavalier malignant, and ride togeder for our lifes."

"That is true, for I saw them," said one of the officers of the train-bands.

"And do you pretend to say you do not know his name?" demanded Colonel Hotham, gazing

with the fierceness of disappointment upon the worthy captain's face.

"Oh, I tink I heard his name on board de sheep," answered Barecolt; "but I cannot be too sure. Let me see. It vas de Colonel de Mery: vas it not dat you told me, sair?" and he turned to the earl with a low bow.

"I answer no questions here, sir," replied Lord Beverley. "This is no lawful court, and the people are not seeking justice, but a pretext for murder."

"Ah, murder!—dat be very bad!" cried Captain Barecolt, with a shrug of his shoulders; "men may kill one de oder in fair fight very vell, but murder be very bad indeed! Perhaps dey murder me too!"

"Very likely," answered the earl drily; but Colonel Hotham exclaimed, "Silence! I have given you an opportunity, sir, of saving your life by telling plainly who this man is. You would not take it, and now we shall soon see who you are yourself. Bring in that Mr. Dry."

Captain Barecolt's countenance fell, for he had remarked the room-door of Mr. Dry open on the preceding night, as he walked somewhat late to bed; and, though he had not been aware at the time that the worthy master of Longsoaken was aware and watching, he doubted not now that his own arrest was owing to that gentleman's good offices. He prepared for the worst, however, and determined to adhere stoutly to his story, thanking his stars that he had alluded to his rencontre with Cornet Stumpborough before Mr. Dry was called.

He was not long kept in suspense, however; for not more than half a minute elapsed before Mr. Dry of Longsoaken entered the room, with his face very pale and his nose very blue, as if recovering from a severe illness; and, taking his place at a convenient distance from the renowned captain, replied at once to Colonel Hotham's first question,—

"That, worshipful sir?—that is one Captain Barecolt, a notorious malignant, now actually in arms against the authority of the two houses."

"Oh, I tell you so!" cried Barecolt, with a well-feigned look of impatience. "Capitaine Barecole again! Cuss Capitaine Barecole! Now he swear me black in de face dat I vere Capitaine Barecole just as de oder did."

"I will swear, to be sure," replied Mr. Dry; "for, as I have a conscience and a soul to be saved, you are the man. We all know you are very cunning, Captain Barecolt; but if you can cheat in other matters, you cannot cheat in this. I know you well enough, after having been carried along as a captive in bonds, by you and other Amorites like you, for several mortal days."

"What he mean by Amorite?" asked Barecolt, with a look of ignorance; but Colonel Hotham interposed, saying,—

"That will do, sir; stand down! You shall hear more as soon as you could wish. Now, worshipful Master Dry, be so good as to look well at that other person, and say if you have seen him before."

Mr. Dry did as he was directed, but the appearance of the earl puzzled him more; for though the beauty of his features was remarkable, yet, even to those who had seen him often, the black dye with which he had tinged his hair and beard made so great a change that it would have been difficult to recognise him.

"Yes," said the master of Longsoaken at length,—"yes, I am very sure I have seen him before, though I think his hair was of a different colour then. I met him as he was riding up to the house of the malignant Lord Walton, at Bishop's Merton. He stayed there all night, I heard, on the day when the house took fire. I am quite sure it is the same, though his hair is dyed."

"It is," replied Colonel Hotham in a stern and determined tone, "and I will tell you who he is, gentlemen; for, though he thinks I do not know him, yet I do. I was a fool not to recognise him at first. This, sirs, is the noble Earl of Beverley, who has now come into this garrison of Hull as a spy, and deserves death by all the laws of war."

"It is false, sir!" answered the earl, gazing on him fixedly. "Whoever I am, I came not here as a spy."

"Do you mean to deny your name, my lord?" demanded Colonel Hotham.

"I mean to answer no questions, sir," said the earl, "but merely to give you the lie in your teeth, when you assert a falsehood. I stand upon your father's safe-conduct, and call him to witness that he gave it to me."

"The pass I tore was not in favour of the Earl of Beverley," replied the officer; "and that you are he will soon be proved, though I thought fit to call upon these men first. Ask Colonel Jackson to step hither," he continued, speaking to the guard, "and the two other gentlemen in the red room."

The name he mentioned was familiar to the ear of Lord Beverley, who remembered that Colonel Jackson was in the hall where he had had his first interview with Sir John Hotham, but, owing to the disguise which he had assumed, had not recognised him on that occasion. He could little hope, however, that the Parliamentary officer would fail to do so now, when his attention was particularly drawn to the examination; and the matter was but too soon decided. Three gentlemen were one by one introduced into the room, and told to examine the earl and state who he was; and each, though with apparent reluctance, pronounced the words, "Lord Beverley."

"The case is clear, gentlemen," said Colonel Hotham. "The Earl of Beverley, under a feigned name and with an invalid pass, has introduced himself into this garrison. It is for you to say whether, under these circumstances, he is or is not a spy, and subject to the invariable law of such cases."

"Remembering always," rejoined the earl,

"that you have no proof that the safe-conduct was invalid, Colonel Hotham having torn it, so that it has never been beneath your eyes; and not forgetting that, even supposing this to be a lawfully-constituted court-martial,—which I deny, he having no authority to summon one,—he has refused to call the only witness I judged necessary to my defence."

He spoke calmly and firmly, with his cheek perhaps a shade paler than it usually was, but with no other visible sign of emotion, while the countenance of Colonel Hotham, on whom his eyes were fixed, worked with many mingled passions which resisted control.

"This is all vain and foolish!" cried the latter; "I will tell the earl that I have authority, which I should not scruple to exercise, to put him to death at once, but that I have thought it better to give him the chance of this investigation."

"Young man," said the military preacher, addressing Hotham in a solemn tone, "if you give a man in bonds a chance, it should be a fair one. Such has not been afforded the prisoner. Why did you tear the paper? Why do you now refuse to confront him with the witness he calls?—and if that witness be too ill, why not wait till he be well, as he requires? Why not, if not to doom him to death at your pleasure? I will go no farther in this—I wash my hands of this blood."

"Well, then, we will put it to the vote," cried Colonel Hotham fiercely; "and look to yourself, Captain Marsh. He that puts his hand to the plough must not turn back. Look to yourself, I say."

"I will," replied the old officer of the train-bands; "and I am not to be frightened from a righteous course by loud words or frowning brows. I fear not what man can do unto me."

"Pshaw!" cried Colonel Hotham, turning away. "Your verdict, sir, upon these two men—guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty," said the Londoner to whom he spoke, without a moment's pause.

"Guilty," said the other on the colonel's left, answering a mere look.

"I doubt," replied Captain Marden of the train-bands, when Hotham turned to him.

"But I do not," rejoined that officer; "and I say guilty too—so there are three voices against two. They are condemned. Take them hence to the water-gate, call out a file of men, and the rest—as yesterday. I spare you the rope, Lord Beverley, in consideration of your rank. You shall die as a soldier."

"And you as a murderer!" shouted Barecolt, rushing towards him so suddenly that he caught him by the throat with both hands before any one could interpose.

The two Parliamentary officers drew their swords; the guards were rushing up from the door; but, under the strong pressure of Captain Barecolt's fingers, Colonel Hotham was turning black in the face, and might have been strangled before he could have been delivered, when suddenly a voice was heard exclaiming, "Halt! Not a man stir! Guard the door!" And all was silence.

Captain Barecolt slightly relaxed his grasp, the Parliamentary officers drew back, and Sir John Hotham, with an excited and angry countenance, and evidently in great pain, walked up the room and took his place at the head of the table.

"What is all this?" he demanded. "Unloose my son, sir! What is the meaning of this, Colonel Hotham?"

"*Pardi!* I will unloose him, now you be come, gouverneur," replied Barecolt, taking away his hands and drawing back; "but, begar! if you had not come, he be strangle!"

Colonel Hotham sank in a chair, gasping for breath, and one of the officers from London took upon him to reply, "This is a court-martial, Sir John, summoned to try—"

"And by whose authority?" demanded the governor fiercely; "who dares to summon a court-martial in Hull but myself?"

"But you were ill, sir," replied the officer, "and Colonel Hotham judged it expedient to summon us."

"He did, did he?" cried the governor. "Colonel Hotham, give up your sword. You are under arrest. Remove him, guards—take him away! This is no court—all its proceedings are illegal, and shall so be dealt with. Gentlemen, you are dismissed. Away! We have had too much of you."

Some of those present were inclined to remonstrate; but the old man who alone had interfered in behalf of the earl said aloud, "You are quite right, Sir John. The court and all its proceedings were illegal and iniquitous."

Colonel Hotham, too, strove to make himself heard; but the governor exclaimed in a loud and angry tone, "Away! have I not said it? Guards, clear the room, and take that young man away. Place a sentry at his chamber-door; he is under arrest."

Sir John Hotham had not come alone, for the further end of the hall displayed a considerable party of the train-bands; and, muttering some very unpleasant observations on his father's conduct, Colonel Hotham was removed, while the rest of the body whom he had chosen to constitute a court-martial retired slowly and sheepishly, leaving the governor with two prisoners, Mr. Dry of Longsoaken, and a party of the guard.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Sir John Hotham gazed alternately at Lord Beverley, Captain Barecolt, and Mr. Dry of Longsoaken, with not a little of that irascibility which is common in the complaint from which he was suffering still evident in his countenance, and ready to fall upon any one who said a word to provoke his wrath. As several of the guard were in the room, Lord Beverley thought it most prudent to remain perfectly silent; and the governor at length began the conversation by exclaiming, "And who the devil is this fellow?" At the same time he pointed to Mr. Dry, with no very placable looks.

"I am a poor, God-fearing man, worshipful sir," began the personage of whom he spoke; but Captain Barecolt interrupted him before he could say more.

"He is von of de greatest rogue in all de Christendom," he said, turning to the governor. "I know he very vell. He sheat de king, he sheat de Parliament, he sheat everybody. He be von grand imposture."

"The devil he is!" exclaimed the governor. "Is this true, sir?" And he looked to Lord Beverley for an answer.

"Perfectly, Sir John," replied the earl. "I have heard a good deal of this gentleman from various quarters; and I know that he carried off a young gentlewoman from her friends, and brought her hither to Hull, with very sinister views indeed."

Mr. Dry held up his hands and showed the whites of his eyes; but the governor exclaimed, "Ay, by ——!" and he added a very unsanctified oath: "I recollect the scoundrel now. He came here two or three days ago; he came here making a great noise about this girl, and asking for warrants, and I know not what; he declared that she was his ward. Take him by the ears, fellows, and turn him out of the town. We want no such vagabonds amongst us."

"I warn you, worshipful sir, I warn you," cried Mr. Dry, while two of the guards took him by the arms, "that these are two malignants and prelatic conspirators. Did not false witnesses rise up against—"

"Away with him!" shouted Sir John Hotham before he could finish the sentence; "away with him! and if he continues to bawl, put him in the stocks and let him bawl there."

The soldiers removed Mr. Dry of Longsoaken without further resistance; for he, like Erasmus, was not of the stuff from which they make martyrs, and the name of the stocks had a great effect upon him. The governor then directed the rest of the soldiers to quit the room, but to wait in the passage without, adding, "I will examine into the case of these gentlemen myself."

As soon as the room was clear he turned to the Earl of Beverley, saying, "This is an unfortunate affair, my lord. You see how things go. What can I do?"

"Why, methinks, Sir John," rejoined the earl, approaching the governor, and speaking in a whisper, "the only thing for you to do is, to throw open the gates at once to his majesty's forces, and declare your loyalty. A few hours would bring the army hither."

"Impossible! impossible!" cried Hotham aloud, with an impatient look. "You know not what you talk of, sir. Everything is changed since you were here. This place is full of people sent down from the Parliament. It will be as much as I can do to get you out safely, and unless my son had given me cause to shut him up, I could not even do that. He cannot be kept in long, however, for ere noon I shall have remonstrances enow, and your only safety is in immediate departure. You shall have a new pass without delay, and then the sooner your back is turned on Hull the better."

"But what shall I say to the king?" demanded the earl, willing to make one more effort for the grand object of his coming; "he fully expects—"

"Expects what cannot be done!" exclaimed the governor impatiently. "Give my humble duty to his majesty, and say I will lose no opportunity to do him service, but that I am no longer master in Hull. Tell him he had better withdraw his troops as soon as may be, for if they come before the walls the cannon must be fired on them, which I would fain avoid. But say, sir—say that my heart is with him, and that it is against my will I close the gates."

As he spoke, he drew the inkstand closer, and wrote a fresh pass for the earl, looking up and adding, "But I will send people with you to see you clear of the gates. On my life, I scarce know what contempt these men will show to my orders; and 'tis as likely as not that they would stop you and hang you in the streets if you had not a guard."

"Begar, den, de sooner we vish them good morning de better!" cried Captain Barecolt.

"But, Sir John, there is another matter," said Lord Beverley, as the governor put his signature to the paper. "You have here in bonds my friend and the king's faithful servant, Colonel Ashburnham. I do beseech you, for my sake, and for your loyalty's sake, set him free also."

"Nay, I know not how that may be," replied Sir John Hotham: "the Parliament have written to my son, I hear, to send him up to Westminster."

"But your son is not governor of Hull," answered the earl; "if the mandate came to him, not to you, there can be no cause why you should know or recognise it. If you miss this opportunity of sending him away with us, you may regret it when you have no longer the power to show such an act of courtesy."

"True, true!" replied Sir John Hotham: "I have promised him his freedom, and he shall have it, if the devil himself keep the gates. Stay here a minute—stay here!" and

rising from his chair he limped away, and left Captain Barecolt and the earl alone in the hall.

A few minutes passed in explanations between the two Cavaliers; but then they began to be somewhat impatient for the governor's return, as they were but too well aware that their situation was still full of danger and difficulty. Minute after minute passed, however, without his coming; and a considerable degree of noise in the house, the moving about of many feet, and a good deal of bustle and confusion, did not tend to quiet their apprehensions.

"By heaven, my lord!" cried Barecolt at length, "I fear your lordship has gone further than that worthy gentleman of old times who sacrificed himself for his friend; for I've a great notion that you have sacrificed me also for this good colonel, who was the original cause of all our mishap. I would have let him take his chance and get out as he could."

But while the renowned captain was thus remonstrating, the door again opened, and Sir John Hotham reappeared, followed by Colonel Ashburnham. "Quick, quick!" cried the governor; "you must lose no more time, but all get away together. Here is already a deputation to remonstrate; but I have shut the fellows up in a room above, and they shall wait long enough before they see me."

"But we must provide a horse for my good friend here," said Lord Beverley, who was shaking Ashburnham by the hand.

"That's all done, that's all done!" said Sir John Hotham; "his horse and yours are both waiting in the court, and a party of men to see you safe out of the town, and to ensure that you speak with no one as you go. We must treat you as enemies, my lord, though we could wish you were friends."

"But my horse!" cried the renowned Captain Barecolt: "I have left him at the inn."

This intelligence somewhat discomposed Sir John Hotham; but it was at length determined that Barecolt should have a fresh pass made out in his own name, and should be left with this security, to find his way out of Hull as best he might; and the whole party, issuing forth into the court, left Sir John Hotham to account for his conduct, in the matter of their liberation, to the partisans of the Parliament in the town. In taking leave of him also, we need only remind the reader that these very events, not long afterwards, brought his head to the block.

CHAPTER XLIV.

PARTIES of the royalist army were moving in every direction round Hull, and from time to time saker and falconet, and such other artillery as the garrison had been able to muster on the walls, were discharged at the adventurous Cavaliers who approached too near, when Mr. Dry of Longsoaken, having been permitted by the guard who had him in charge to gather his baggage hastily together at the "Swan," and to saddle his horse, issued forth from the gates, leaving behind him, in the hands of Mrs. White, in part payment of his bill, the horse on which Arrah Neil had ridden thither. Not that Mr. Dry had come unprovided with the needful means of meeting any expenses he might incur; far from it, for he was a wealthy man, and for many years had never known what even temporary want was; but he loved barter, and generally gained by it; and though he was indeed obliged to dispose of the nag to the good landlady at a loss, yet this loss, as he contrived it, was less than would have been incurred by any other process.

However, when he stood without the gates and saw them closed behind him; when he beheld, wherever he turned, some body of horse or foot at the distance of less than a mile; and, more than all, when he heard a cannon boom over his head from above, the heart of Mr. Dry of Longsoaken sank, and he felt a degree of trepidation he had never known in life before. What to do he could not tell; but after much deliberation he resolved to stay where he was till the royalist troops were withdrawn, calculating justly that they would not approach so near as to do him any harm, and that the troops within would not issue forth while the others were in sight.

One point, indeed, he did not foresee. The Earl of Beverley and Colonel Ashburnham had passed out while he was at the inn, but the redoubtable Captain Barecolt was still behind; and, as the evil fate of Mr. Dry would have it, just after he had remained under shelter of the archway for one hour and a quarter by the great clock, holding his horse by the bridle all the time, the gate behind him suddenly began to clank and rattle in the painful operation of giving exit to that great hero.

Mr. Dry started up and looked behind him, lifting his foot towards the stirrup at the same moment; and, as soon as he beheld Captain Barecolt, he scrambled into the saddle as well as he could; but, alas! that renowned officer was already mounted, and Mr. Dry had to perform an operation which was difficult to him. He had got his left foot in the stirrup; he had swung himself up into the saddle; but before his right foot could find its place of repose (and Mr. Dry did not venture to spur on till it had), the gates were closed behind Captain Barecolt, and he himself was by the Puritan's side.

"Ha, ha, old drybones!" said that officer; "have I caught thee at length?"

"What want you with me, man of Belial?" demanded the master of Longsoaken, with the cat-in-a-corner courage of despair. "Get you gone upon your way, and let better men than yourself follow theirs."

"Nay, good faith!" answered Barecolt, stretching out his left hand and grasping Mr. Dry's rein; "I always love that better men than myself should bear me company, and such is to be thy fate, O Dry! so do not think to escape it; for, as sure as my name is de Capitaine Jersval, if you attempt any one of all those running tricks which you know so well how to practise, I will slit your weasand incontinent. It matters not two straws to me whether I have you alive or dead, but have your corpus I will, as the prisoner of my bow and spear, as you would call it. Come, use your spurs, or I must spur your beast for you. You see that party of honest Cavaliers there on the hill—terrible malignants, every one of them, that would have a pleasure in roasting you by a slow fire, like a tough old goose, and basting you with those strong waters that you love so well. To them we are going, so spur on with the alacrity which your good luck deserves. What! you will not? Oh, then, I must make you!" and, drawing his sword, he pricked Mr. Dry's horse so close to that worthy gentleman's thigh, that he started and rose in the stirrups.

The poor beast darted on in an instant, and in so doing shook Mr. Dry a good deal; but whether the concussion elicited a brilliant thought from his brain or not, he exclaimed immediately after,—

"Harkye, Captain Barecolt! I have a word for ye. Do not let us ride so fast. I have an offer to make. Listen a moment."

Mr. Dry understood the peculiar genus of captain to which Barecolt belonged, but he did not understand the exact variety. He knew that, with most adventurous soldiers like himself, the food for which they hungered was gold. Drink might do much, dice might do much, fair ladies might do more; but gold, gold was paramount—an attraction not to be resisted. Mr. Dry loved gold too, and overvalued its importance; but he felt a strong internal conviction that, if carried at once to the quarters of Lord Walton, life, which was the grand means of getting and enjoying gold, would be of a very short duration. He saw a noose dangling from a cross-tree before his eyes, and he wisely calculated that it would be better to sacrifice some portion of the less valuable commodity to save the more valuable; and therefore he prepared to tempt his companion's cupidity—not without a faint hope of cheating him after all, but with the resolution of giving anything that might save his life.

A sudden thought, too, had struck Captain Barecolt, which he proceeded to follow out, as will be seen presently; but its first effect was to make him draw in his rein, and also check the horse of Mr. Dry, over which he exercised supreme command; and, as he did so, he said in a dry and bantering tone,—

"Well, worshipful Mr. Dry, speak what you have to speak. As you will not have leisure to use your tongue much more on earth, it would be hard to deny you a few words. You are going to the gallows, Mr. Dry,—you are going to the gallows; and though I cannot promise that you shall swing as high as Haman, yet you shall have as decent an execution as time and circumstances permit, and plenty of room for your feet."

"Nay," said Dry, with a sort of sobbing sigh, "you would not be so barbarous, so unchristian, especially when I am willing to pay ransom. Listen, captain—listen, noble Captain Barecolt: if you will not take me and put me into the hands of yonder men of Belial, I will —I will go as far as a hundred pounds."

"Men of Belial, sirrah!" cried Barecolt, turning upon him fiercely. "How dare you call his majesty's forces men of Belial! Those very words shall cost you five hundred pounds, if you would save your life."

Though the captain's words were fierce, yet they served to show that he was not quite inaccessible, and Mr. Dry began at once to higgle about his ransom; but Barecolt showed himself as hard a bargainer as he was himself; and as he perceived that every step they took in advance increased the trepidation of the worthy man of Longsoaken, he used the screw thus afforded him to squeeze Mr. Dry very painfully. Now he pushed on his horse—now he slackened his pace—now he pointed out a party of Cavaliers approaching very near; and, discovering exactly what Mr. Dry had upon his person, he took care to make his demand much more, in order that he might have the opportunity of keeping him in his hands till the sum was paid, which was indeed the principal object he had in view.

Some difficulties, totally independent of Mr. Dry's natural reluctance to part with his money even to save his life, occurred in the course of the negotiation. Barecolt was well aware, from what he had seen of the king's conduct, that if the prisoner were taken to the camp, instead of mounting a ladder, he would more likely regain his liberty very speedily; and the worthy Puritan, on the contrary, was terrified at the very thought of approaching the royal quarters, his consciousness of offences grave and manifold presenting instant death to his imagination as the only result. What then was to be done with him while he remained in the custody of Captain Barecolt? That valiant gentleman proposed that he should assume a false name, and pass as a friend of his in the camp; but Mr. Dry, remembering that he was known to many in Lord Walton's troop, rejected this idea as totally inconsistent with his own safety.

"You might as well hang me at once," he said.

"That might be pleasant enough," answered

Barecolt, "were it not that you have only a hundred and fifty pounds about you, Mr. Dry. However, let me see: if we take this little hollow way to the left, methinks it will lead us to the hamlet just below the old church. I could stow you away in that building, as a young friend of mine was once served by some of your people, while I send for some of my own men to keep guard over you, and I go and report myself."

"No, not there! not there!" cried he of Longsoaken, turning paler than ever. "No, no! But there is an alehouse farther on, where we could find accommodation. They are good and pious people there."

"For which reason I will have nothing to do with them," answered the profane captain. "No, but I know of a tavern, just a mile from Beverley, where you can be lodged safely, Mr. Dry; and as, if you are taken and hanged, I lose five hundred good pounds, you may be quite sure that I will take as much pains to keep your neck out of the halter as I will to guard against your escape. We will talk about the means of getting the money from Bishop's Merton hereafter; so now come on quick. We shall turn the flank of that party we saw upon the hill in five minutes, without their seeing us, if we keep in the hollow way; and should we meet any stragglers, you must either keep a silent tongue in your head or curse and swear like a trooper."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Mr. Dry, turning up his eyes.

"Phoo!" cried Captain Barecolt, "I know you would trample on the cross as the Dutchmen do in Japan, to save your life;" and after the assertion of this undeniable fact he hurried forward, nor drew a rein till they reached the village, and the inn which he had mentioned.

They found three or four of the inferior followers of the court in possession of the public-house; but, though two of them were known to the politic captain, they were not personages whom he chose to trust; and, conveying Mr. Dry to an upper room, he bestowed a small piece of silver upon one of the boys of the place, to run up to Beverley and bring down one Corporal Curtis from his troop. In the meanwhile, he informed Mr. Dry that it would be as well if he would give up into his secure keeping, to be duly accounted for at an after period, all his worldly goods and chattels, including his tawny-sheathed, steel-mounted sword; and, though that worshipful person submitted with but an ill grace to the law of necessity, the pitiless captain employed very searching measures to ascertain that he retained nothing, either on his person or in his saddle-bags, but a decent change of apparel. When this was done, as Corporal Curtis had not yet appeared, Captain Barecolt called for a pottle of good wine, the cost of which he disbursed from Mr. Dry's store, noting it carefully down in a small, dirty memorandum book, as he sagely remarked that he would have to reckon with that gentleman when they parted. The last cup was in the pottle-pot, and the gallant officer was seriously thinking of calling for more, when a tall, athletic man was ushered in, having some resemblance to Barecolt himself, into whose hands the captain consigned Mr. Dry, with a positive and loud injunction not to lose sight of him even for a moment, and to shoot him through the head if he attempted to escape.

Corporal Curtis promised to obey, saying drily, with a nod at their companion, that he remembered the march from Bishop's Merton; and Barecolt, leaving him in such good hands, mounted his horse and rode off to Beverley. He was kept there for many hours before he could obtain a private audience of Lord Walton; but at the end of that period he was closeted with the young nobleman for a long time, and when their conference was at an end they walked away together to the quarters of Major Randal, where another long private conversation took place. What passed might be difficult as well as tedious to tell; but, in the end, towards five o'clock of the afternoon, Captain Barecolt returned to the village, where he had left his captive, accompanied by two stout troopers selected by himself from his own troop; and, ascending to the chamber of Mr. Dry, he announced to him, in a tone that admitted of no reply, that he must mount and accompany him at once towards Bishop's Merton.

"I have determined, most worshipful sir," he said, as soon as he had sent Corporal Curtis out of the room, "to see you safe on your way till we are within half a day's march of Longsoaken. You will then have the goodness to give an order for the payment of your ransom to one of my friends, who will rejoin us when he has received it, and then I will set you free."

"How do I know you will do that?" demanded Dry of Longsoaken in a sullen tone.

"By making use of your common sense, Mr. Dry," replied Captain Barecolt. "Could I not hang you now if I liked it? Can I not hang you now if it pleases me? Will I not hang you now if you affect to doubt the honour of a gentleman and a soldier? So no more on that score, but descend, mount, and march—as you needs must."

There was no remedy, and Mr. Dry obeyed, with vague hopes indeed of making his escape by some fortunate accident on the way. He argued that, in the distracted state of the country, it was barely possible for Captain Barecolt to pass across a great part of England without either encountering some force of the opposite party, or pausing in some town which had espoused the Parliamentary cause, and he believed that in either case his liberation must take place. But he little knew the forethought of that great strategic mind. Barecolt had furnished himself with correct information regarding the views and feelings of all the places he had to pass; and, instead of taking his way by Coventry and Worcester, he led his little troop direct to Nottingham, Derby, and Shrewsbury, almost

in the same course that the king followed shortly after; and at every halting-place Mr. Dry found himself so strictly watched that his hopes declined from hour to hour. He was never left alone, even for a moment, Captain Barecolt himself, or one of the three soldiers who accompanied him, remaining with him night and day. The only chance that seemed left was in meeting with some friends as the party approached Bishop's Merton; but when Mr. Dry remembered that he was totally unarmed, his heart, never the most firm or the most daring, felt inconceivably low at the thought of a struggle; and the sanguinary and ferocious conversation of his captor, the list of slain that his arm had sent to their long account, the bloody battles he had seen, and the dire deeds he had done, made him tremble for the result of any attempt to escape.

At length familiar objects began to greet the eyes of Mr. Dry, He saw places and things which he had often seen before, and knew that he must be within one day's journey of Bishop's Merton; and the very feeling revived in some degree his fainting courage. "Surely," he thought, "the people here must have retained their devotion to the good cause." But, alas! as he rode one morning into a town where he had often bought and sold, he beheld a party of Lord Hertford's horse sitting jesting with the girls in the market-place; and the conversation which he heard as he went along showed him that times had changed, and that people had changed with them.

On leading him up, as had been the inviolable custom since they set out, to a high room in the inn, Captain Barecolt, with a stern tone and countenance, told Corporal Curtis to set a soldier at the door, and to suffer no one to enter. Then, waving his captive to a seat, he took a stool opposite, and, after a solemn pause, addressed him thus:—

"Now, worshipful Master Dry, doubtless you have been puzzling the small wits that God has given you to discover how it happens that an officer like myself, high in the king's confidence, has been induced to traverse so great an extent of country, solely for the purpose of receiving from a mechanical and trading person like yourself the pitiful sum of five hundred pounds, which might have been transmitted by various other means; and it is but fitting that you should know the worst. I and other persons of high rank and station have been made acquainted how, on the death of a poor old man, one Sergeant Neil, you rifled his cottage, and possessed yourself, amongst other things, of sundry papers appertaining to a young lady, who for some years has gone under the name of Arrah Neil, and was supposed to be his grand-daughter.—Don't interrupt me. Having brought you thus far, it is necessary to tell you that, besides an order upon some wealthy man at Bishop's Merton for the five hundred pounds before mentioned, which I shall send on by one of my troopers, it is necessary to your safety and liberation that you should furnish Corporal Curtis with an exact statement of where the said papers are to be found in your house at Longsoaken, and with an order to your people there to aid and assist my said corporal in searching for and finding those documents, expressly stating that you have immediate need of them,—don't interrupt me,—which indeed is the exact truth; for you must know that I have authority, under the hand of competent persons, in case you should show any reluctance to deliver up property belonging to other people, which you have stolen, to hang you upon the branch of a convenient tree in Wilbury Wood, as one taken in arms in open rebellion, otherwise in flagrant delict, worshipful Master Dry. While dinner is getting ready, therefore, you will be good enough to think deliberately over these particulars, and make up your mind as to whether you will like the state of suspense at which I have hinted better than a surrender of that which is not yours."

The varieties of hue which Mr. Dry's countenance had assumed while he listened to this long oration cannot be described here, for the very attempt would require us to go through almost every shade that ever graced a painter's palette. Captain Barecolt had three times told him not to interrupt him, but it was a very unnecessary caution, as that worthy gentleman was too much confounded and thunderstruck to be able to utter a word; and when at length his captor rose, and, going to the door, conversed with the soldier for a few minutes, he remained in a state of impotent rage, bitterness, and disappointment, which had the curious effect of making him bite his under lip well-nigh through with his teeth.

Captain Barecolt was inexorable, however: the dinner was served; and Mr. Dry, though he could with difficulty be brought to eat a mouthful, drank a good deal. The dinner was over, and Captain Barecolt called for writing materials, which were laid before the unfortunate Mr. Dry. He paused, and his hand shook; but the captain was wonderfully calm and composed. He enjoyed the operation very much.

"First, if you please, worshipful Master Dry," he said, "the order on some responsible citizen of Bishop's Merton for five hundred pounds, to be paid at sight; and you will be good enough to eschew the word 'ransom,' putting in that it is for your private necessities."

Mr. Dry wrote as he was directed, and then Captain Barecolt, having examined the paper, placed another sheet before him, saying, "Now for the order to your steward, housekeeper, and all others of your people at Longsoaken, to aid and assist Mr. Curtis — eschew the word 'corporal,' and merely style him 'your friend' —to search for, etc. etc."

Mr. Dry again paused, and Captain Barecolt added, "Remember, I do not press you. I have orders not to press you. If you sign, well; we will go on to a certain cave you know of in Wilbury Wood, where I will keep you company

till my men return, and, as soon as I find that all which is required comes safe to hand, I will instantly set you free without let or hindrance. But if you refuse to sign, I am not to press you —no, not in the least; I am only to hang you in Wilbury Wood as a terror to all offenders. No, I do not press you in the least, Mr. Dry. Act as in your judgment you shall think it expedient."

Mr. Dry took the pen once more, and with a wavering and uncertain hand wrote down the order, very nearly in the terms which Captain Barecolt had dictated. He then stopped a moment, dipped the pen in the ink, gazed in the officer's face, and then added his name.

"Ha, ha, ha!" cried Captain Barecolt, taking the paper with a mocking laugh. "Here is a man who prefers giving up things that don't belong to him to being hung in a nice cool wood. What an extraordinary taste!" and, walking to the door, he put his head out, saying, "Saddle the horses."

"Devil!" cried Mr. Dry of Longsoaken, setting his teeth hard; and at the same time, by a rapid but silent movement, he drew a long, sharp-pointed knife off the table and hastily put it in his pocket.

"Come, Mr. Dry," said Barecolt, turning round, "we shall soon part if your people obey your orders and your correspondent pays the money: so we may as well have another tankard to drink to our next merry meeting. It will make but a small item in your bill. Holloa, there! Bring another tankard, and mind it be of the best."

But when the wine came Mr. Dry refused to drink, saying sullenly that he had had enough to quench his thirst for a week. Captain Barecolt laughed again, for the writhing of his victim was pleasant to him, and, taking up the large jug of wine, he replied, "We have not had you long amongst us, Mr. Dry: you should really bear us company a little longer, to learn to drink deep. This is the way a true *soldado* discusses a stoup of good Bordeaux;" and setting the brim to his lips, he never took it away till the tankard was empty.

"Now, to horse! to horse!" he cried, and, making Mr. Dry go down and mount before him, he sprang lightly upon horseback, seeming all the more brisk and active for his liquor.

After some little shakings of hands and bidding good-bye between Captain Barecolt and his men and the troopers of Lord Hertford, in the streets, the captain's little party rode out of the town, and were soon in the midst of fields and lanes again. Then came a wide, bare common, extending for three or four miles on every side; and as they crossed it a large old wood appeared lying straight before them, and falling into deep waves of brown foliage, with misty dells between.

"Ay, there is old Wilbury Wood, Master Dry," said Captain Barecolt; "you know it well, I daresay."

"You seem to know it well too," answered the Puritan, eyeing him askance.

"To be sure I do," replied the renowned captain; "and while the men are gone upon their errand, I will tell you how. Keep your curiosity cool till then, Master Dry, and you shall be satisfied."

"I have no curiosity about it," growled the Puritan.

"Well, then, you shall hear, whether you have curiosity or not," answered the captain; and on they rode, following a somewhat lonely and unfrequented path into the heart of the wood. The old trees rose around them in wild groups and strange, fantastic forms; the hares bounded away in the underwood, and the squirrels, crossing the path, ran gaily up the trees, while a jay flew on before and scolded them from a bough overhead.

"I think this should be the turning," said the gallant captain at length. "Does not this lead to the cave, Master Dry!"

"Seek it yourself, if you want it," said his companion.

"You are discourteous, knave," said Barecolt, giving him a blow on the ribs that made the worthy gentleman's breath come short. "Learn to be civil to your betters;" and, turning his horse up the path at the mouth of which he had stopped, he led his little party with unerring sagacity to a high rocky promontory in the wood, in the base of which appeared a hollow some ten or twelve feet deep. He there dismounted and made Mr. Dry do the same, and, seeing him safely lodged in the cave, he gave one of the papers to Corporal Curtis, saying, "Take Jukes with you, and do as I told you, corporal. Avoid the town, and be back before dark; for, if they do not give up the papers, I shall want you to help to hang our friend there."

His back was turned to Master Dry; and as he uttered these words aloud, he winked upon the corporal significantly with one small eye.

"They will obey my order," said Dry.

"I trust they will," rejoined Barecolt solemnly. "You, James, take this to Bishop's Merton, and get the money. You may tell Master Winkfield, on whom it is drawn, that Master Dry wants it sadly. So he does, poor man! Look about the town, too, before you return, and see what is going on. I heard this morning that they are turning loyal; and if so, I may honour them with a visit myself some day."

The men rode away, and Captain Barecolt, after having secured the horses to two trees, took his pistols from the saddle and rejoined his prisoner in the cave. There seating himself on the ground, with his long legs stretched out across the mouth of the excavation, he beckoned Mr. Dry with a commanding air to seat himself also. It was easy to perceive that Captain Barecolt had been rendered somewhat more grand in his own opinion by the last stoup of wine, which he had tossed off with no more ceremony than if it had been a gill; and his captive, feeling that it might be dangerous to oppose him even in a trifle, instantly seated

himself on the ground, being at the time somewhat weary with a ride of more than thirty miles that morning.

Captain Barecolt first began by examining the priming of his pistols, the muzzles of which every now and then swept Mr. Dry's person in a manner that made him very uncomfortable; but when this operation was finished, and the pistols were replaced in his belt, the royalist officer turned his looks upon Mr. Dry with a sort of compassionate contempt that was extremely irritating. "Ah, Master Dry, Master Dry!" he said; "both you and I know this wood very well. You often used to come here when you were an apprentice boy with old Nicholas Cobalter; and many a pound of sugar and salt you hid away in that corner, just behind where you are now sitting; many an ounce of pepper you laid in the nook just over your head, till you could dispose of your pilferings."

Mr. Dry said nothing, but gazed at Captain Barecolt from under his bent brows, with a look of hatred and fear, such as might be supposed to pass over his countenance if he had seen the infernal spirit.

"Ay," continued the officer in a somewhat maudlin and sentimental tone, "those were pleasant days, Mr. Dry, especially when you used to take a walk in this wood with buxom Mrs. Cobalter, when her husband went to London town; and she used to say, if ever he died you should be her second, because you were tender of her feelings, and connived at her dealing with the pottle-pot more freely than her husband liked."

"And who the devil are you?" cried Mr. Dry furiously, forgetting all his sanctity in the irritating state of apprehension and astonishment to which he was reduced.

"Ay, those were merry times, Master Dry," continued Barecolt, without noticing his intemperate question, and fixing one eye upon his companion's face, while the other rolled vacantly round the cave, as if searching for memories or ideas. "Yes, Master Dry, no one would have thought to see you the master of Longsoaken in those days. But it all came of the widow, and your stepping into, by her help, all that old Cobalter left. Fair or foul, Master Dry, it matters not—you got it, and that made a man of you."

"And who in the fiend's name are you?" demanded the Puritan, almost springing at his throat.

"I will tell you, Ezekiel Dry," answered Barecolt, bending forward and gazing sternly in his face,—"I will tell you. I am Daniel Cobalter—ay, little Daniel, the old man's only nephew—his brother's son, whom with the widow's aid you cheated of his uncle's inheritance, and left to go out into the world with five crown pieces and a stout heart; and, now that I have you here face to face in Wilbury Wood, what have you to say why I should not blow your brains out for all that you have done to me and mine?"

Mr. Dry of Longsoaken shrank into nothing, while Barecolt continued to gaze upon him as sternly as if he could have eaten him alive. A moment after, however, the gallant captain's face relaxed its awful frown, and with a withering and contemptuous smile he went on: "But set your mind at ease, worm! You are safe in my scorn. I have done better for myself than if I had been tied down to a mechanical life. But take warning by what has happened, and do not let me catch you any more at these tricks, or I will put my boot heel upon your head and tread your brains out like a viper's. There—sit there, and be silent till the men come back; for, if I see you move or hear you speak, you will raise choler in me."

The gallant captain rose, and stood for a minute in the mouth of the cave, then returned again and seated himself, looking at Dry with a sneering smile. "Now art thou hammering thy poor thin brains to find how Daniel Cobalter has become Captain Barecolt; but if thou twistest the letters into proper form, thou wilt find that I have not taken one from any man's name but my own. This is no robbery, Dry."

"Nay, I see! I see!" said the Puritan.

"Ay! dost thou so?" rejoined Barecolt; "then see and be silent;" and he leaned his head upon his hand and gazed forth from the mouth of the cave. Presently Captain Barecolt's head nodded and his breath came more heavily. Dry of Longsoaken gazed at him with his small eyes full of fierce and baleful light; but his face did not grow red or heated with the angry passion that was evidently working within him; on the contrary, it was as white as that of a corpse. "Ruin!" he muttered in a low voice to himself,—"ruin!" and at the same time he put his right hand into his pocket, where he had concealed the knife.

But Captain Barecolt suddenly raised his head. "You moved!" he said sternly.

"It was but for my ease," answered Dry in a whining tone; "this ground is very hard."

"Sit still!" rejoined the captain, frowning, and then resumed the same attitude. In two or three minutes he breathed hard again, and then he snored, for he had drunk much wine and ridden far. For a few minutes Mr. Dry thought he was feigning sleep, and yet it seemed very like reality—sound, heavy, dull.

"It must be speedily, or not at all!" he thought to himself; "the other men may soon be back. Softly! I will try him;" and, rising, he affected to look out of the mouth of the cave. Captain Barecolt slept on.

Ezekiel Dry trembled very much, but he quietly put his hand once more into his pocket and drew forth the knife. He grasped it tight; he took a step forward to the sleeping man's side. Barecolt, accustomed to watch, started, and was rising; but ere he could gain his feet the blow descended on his right breast, and, leaving the knife behind, Dry darted out of the cave.

The blood gushed forth in a stream; but with

a quick and firm hand Barecolt drew a pistol from his belt, cocked it, took a step forward, levelled, and fired. Dry of Longsoaken sprang up a foot from the ground, and fell heavily upon the forest grass, his blood and brains scattered around.

"Ha!" cried Barecolt; "ha, Master Dry! But I feel marvellous faint—very faint; I will sit down;" and, resuming his seat, he leaned back, while his face became as pale as ashes, and the pistol fell from his hands.

CHAPTER XLV.

The attempt upon Hull had been abandoned; and, mortified and desponding, Charles I. had quitted Beverley and pursued his march through the land. The Earl of Essex lay in force at Northampton; but no show of energy announced at this time the successes which the Parliamentary armies were ultimately to obtain. The mightier spirits had not yet risen from the depth; and the ostensible engines with which faction worked were, as usual, the cunning artifice, the well-told lie, the exaggerated grievance, the suppressed truth, the dark insinuation, by which large classes, if not whole nations, may be stirred up either for good or evil. There was activity in all the small and petty arts of agitation; there was activity in those courses which prepare the way for greater things; but in that which was to decide all—arms—tardiness, if not sloth, was alone apparent.

It is strange, in reviewing all great political convulsions, to remark how petty are the events and how small are really the men by which great success is obtained, though insignificant incidents swell into importance by their mass, and mean characters gain a reflected sublimity from the vastness of the results by which their deeds are followed. Even individual vices and weaknesses acquire a certain grandeur under the magnifying power of important epochs, and from the uses to which they are turned; and the hypocrisy of Cromwell, and the bombast of Napoleon, which would have excited little but contempt in less prominent persons, appear in a degree sublime by being displayed on a wider stage, and employed as means to a mightier end. We are too apt to judge of efforts by results, as of people by their success, noticing but little, in the appreciation of men's characters, one of the chief elements which distinguish the great from the little,—the objects which they propose to themselves,—and, in our judgment of their skill, taking into small account the difficulties that opposed and the facilities that favoured the accomplishment of their designs; and it is curious to remark, that the revolutions which have carried great usurpers into power have always raised the ambitious, and left the patriotic behind, as if human selfishness were the only motive which can ensure that continuity of effort and unity of purpose which alone can command success amongst the struggles of diverse factions and the development of infinitely varied opinions.

The Earl of Essex was a higher-minded man than Cromwell, but he had doubts and hesitations which Cromwell's ambition would not entertain; and there can be but little doubt that he was unwilling to strike the first irrevocable blow against an army commanded by his sovereign in person. Doubtless he fancied, as many did, that the small force collected tardily by a monarch without supplies would speedily melt away, and leave Charles, from sheer necessity, to accept any terms that the Parliament chose to dictate; but, whatever was the cause, the king was permitted to march to Shrewsbury unopposed, while the Parliamentary forces lay inactive at Northampton. The reception given to the monarch in the town was such as to encourage high hopes in all; and, as Wales was rising in his favour, it was judged expedient that Charles should visit the principality in person, while the army recruited itself on the banks of the Severn, and every effort was made to obtain a supply of arms and money. Provisions, indeed, were abundant; the royalist troops were regularly paid; greater order and more perfect discipline were maintained than had ever before been observed in the army; and a state of calm and cheerful enjoyment reigned in the good old town, which is but too seldom known in civil wars.

Such was the state of things, when, one evening, a little before sunset, just after the king had left Shrewsbury for Wales, two persons, a gentleman and a lady, wandered along through the fields on the banks of the river, once more full of happy dreams and hopes of bright hours to come. Lord Beverley gazed down into his fair companion's eyes as she lifted her sunny look towards his fine expressive face, and he saw in those two wells of light the deep, pure love of which he had so often dreamed; while Annie Walton, in the countenance of him who regarded her with such fond thoughtfulness, read the intense and passionate tenderness which alone can satisfy the heart, and teach the spirit of woman to repose with calm security on the love of her future husband. It is too late in the tale either to paint the feelings which were in the bosom of each at that moment or to tell the words of dear affection that they spoke; the thrill of mutual attachment; the trembling flutter of the heart as she thought of the near-approaching hour; the glad eagerness of his to make her his own beyond the power of fate; the visions of future joy, and the long vistas of happy years which the warm imagination of each presented—not the less bright and sparkling because, on her side as on his, though from different causes, vague clouds and indistinct shadows hung over parts of the scene which

fancy painted. Come what might, in a few days they were to be united; and that was enough for the hour.

They had been long talking over their plans and prospects; the old house of Longnar Hall was to be their abode for the next three weeks; their marriage was to be as private and quiet as even Annie Walton's heart could desire; and the circumstances of the times gave fair excuse for cutting off all ceremonies and casting away all formal delays. Of three weeks they thought themselves secure, and within that little space was bounded all the real lifetime of their hopes. Beyond!—what was beyond? Who could say? And yet they dreamed of days long after, and Fancy looked over the prison walls of the present, and told them of fair scenes and glowing landscapes which only her eye could descry.

"I could have wished," said Annie Walton, after a pause, "that Charles could have been married on the same day."

The earl smiled. "Then you see it now, beloved?" he replied.

"Nay, Francis, who could help seeing it?" asked Miss Walton. "Arrah herself must see and know it; and yet she seems not so happy, not so cheerful, as I should have thought such knowledge would make her, for I am very sure that she has loved him long, and at one time I feared for and pitied her."

"And he has loved her long too, Annie," replied the earl; "longer than you believe, or he himself knew. This passion has been growing like a flower in the spring; first in the bud, as pity; then showing its first hues as deep interest and tenderness; then partly expanding like the timid blushing blossom which seems to fear that even the green leaves around should look into its glowing breast, and at last, on a bright warm day, opening wide to the bright sun. Charles Walton, when first I saw your own dear eyes at Bishop's Merton, felt love, or something very like it, for Arrah Neil; and yet he would have been strangely hurt if any had told him that he ever thought of the poor, wild cottage girl with aught but mere compassion."

"You men are strange beings!" replied Annie Walton, with a sigh and a smile at the same time; "and yet I am not without my fears for that dear child. Unless the proofs of who she is can be found and clearly made out, what will be Charles's conduct?"

"I will tell you, love," answered Lord Beverley. "Pride will yield, Annie, to the noblest and strongest quality of your brother's heart—the sense of honour. He has displayed his love for her too openly to herself for Charles Walton to hesitate. Other men might do so, and think themselves justified in sacrificing both her peace and their own affection to the cold judgment of the world; but if a time should come when he has to ask himself what he is to Arrah Neil, still poor, still unknown in position, and even in name, he will feel himself plighted to her by the words and looks of these days, and, as I have said, he will not hesitate."

"I trust it may be so," replied the lady; "and indeed I think it will, for he is generous and kind; but yet I wish this man would return with the papers that he undertook to bring. Here several weeks have passed, and no tidings have been heard of him. Surely that sad hypocrite, Dry, cannot have bribed him."

"Oh no!" exclaimed the earl, with a laugh. "All men have their own notions of honour, dearest; and though he is loose and dissolute, a babbler and a braggadocio, yet his courage and his fidelity are beyond doubt. If he is not dead, he will come back. But what is that lying in the grass?"

"Good heaven! it is a dead man!" cried Annie Walton, turning pale.

"Nay, some one asleep, rather," said her lover; "he is not like the dead. See! his arm is folded to pillow his head. Wait here a moment, Annie, and I will go and see."

Lord Beverley advanced to the spot where the person they had been speaking of was stretched in the long grass, and gazed upon him for an instant without speaking. Then, taking him by the arm, he shook him gently to rouse him, and with a start the sleeper sat up and gazed around.

"Good gracious me!" he cried, as he awoke; "where am I? Ah, my lord the earl! is that you? Well, this is a lucky chance indeed!"

"Why, how came you sleeping here, Master Falgate?" inquired the earl; "and how did you get out of Hull?"

"I came here on the carriage provided by nature, my good lord," answered the painter; "and I was sleeping because I could not keep my eyes open. To get out of Hull was no difficulty, but to get out of Worcester was hard work indeed;" and he went on to relate how he had travelled on foot from Hull to Worcester, and there, having ventured upon some loyal speeches over a cup of ale, had found himself speedily under charge of a guard, from whom he escaped after innumerable obstacles (which need not be detailed to the reader), and had walked from that city to the neighbourhood of Shrewsbury, a distance of more than forty-seven miles, between the preceding midnight and one o'clock of that day, when, utterly exhausted, he had lain down to rest and fallen asleep.

"This is an old friend of mine, dear Annie," said the earl, turning to Miss Walton, who had come slowly up when she saw that the poor painter was not dead; "and as he showed good discretion in my case, at a very critical moment, we must do what we can for him. So, Master Falgate," he continued, "the good folks of Worcester seem very rebelliously inclined, to treat you so harshly for a few loyal words?"

"Good faith! my noble lord, the men of Worcester had little to do with it," replied Falgate. "It was Lord Essex's soldiers that were so barbarous to poor me. Have you not

heard that he took up his quarters at Worcester yesterday?"

"No, indeed!" said the earl, a cloud coming over his countenance at the thought of fresh dangers and delays. "No, indeed; but come with us into the city, Falgate. Your intelligence must be valuable; and, as for yourself, I must do what I can to place you in some good regiment of foot."

"No, no, my lord," answered the painter; "I have done with soldiering; I was never made for it. I do not like to paint men's faces with blood, or to see it done. All that you can do for me is to bring me to speak to a noble gentleman named Lord Walton, if such a thing is ever to take place; for I have hunted him to Beverley, to York, to Nottingham, and then, finding the Roundheads in the way, in an unlucky day took Worcester on my road hither. So I do think I shall never see him."

"Nothing can be more easy, my good friend," answered the earl: "Lord Walton is here, and this lady is his sister. Come with us, and you will see him in a few minutes."

The poor painter, who was not without his share of taste, was delighted at his meeting with Miss Walton, whose beautiful face and form were ready passports to his respect and admiration; nor did her words and manner produce less effect; for, to the heart of Annie, the least service rendered to him she loved made the doer interesting in her eyes; and with gentle tones and kindly looks she told poor Diggory Falgate that she had heard of him and of his discretion from Lord Beverley, and thanked him deeply for the caution he had shown. Had Diggory Falgate been Captain Barecolt, she would instantly have had a full account of all that had been done to save the earl by informing Sir John Hotham of his situation, together with various additions and improvements, which would have left all the honour of his deliverance with the worthy narrator. But Falgate, to whom the presence of beauty had something almost awful in it, did not even take to himself the credit that was rightly his due, but walked on nearly in silence beside the earl and his fair companion, till, entering the town of Shrewsbury, they reached the house where Lady Margaret Langley and her young relations had taken up their abode, near the Wellington gate of the city.

"Is Lord Walton within?" the earl demanded, addressing one of the servants in the old porch, and the answer was, "Yes, my lord. He is in the small room on the left with my lady;" and, leading Annie on, Falgate following close behind, Lord Beverley entered the chamber, saying, "Here is a good friend of mine, Charles, who brings you tidings from Hull."

Lord Walton rose from a seat between that of Lady Margaret and fair Arrah Neil, gazing upon the painter through the dim evening light, which found its way in at the tall lattice window, without the slightest recollection of his face, as indeed he had never before seen him. But the moment that Falgate beheld Arrah Neil he advanced a step or two towards her, then stopped and hesitated, for her dress was much altered, and then went on again, but with a timid and doubtful air.

Arrah, however, welcomed him with a kindly smile, holding out her hand to him and saying, "Ah, Master Falgate! I am glad to see you safe. This is the person whom I mentioned, Charles, who aided my escape from Hull."

"He deserves all our thanks, dear Arrah," replied Charles Walton, "and every recompense that we can give him; but did I understand right, sir, that you have business with me?"

"Why, I had, my noble lord," answered Falgate in a somewhat faltering tone; "but—but, as I have found this young lady, I think it is to her I should speak, for the business is her own. I only asked for your lordship because—because I had heard that you were her best friend."

"Oh yes! indeed he is," exclaimed Arrah Neil warmly; "and whatever is to be said had better be said to him: he can judge rightly of things that I do not understand."

"Well, then, speak to me here, sir," said Lord Walton, retiring towards the window. "You had better come too, Arrah, for we may want you in our council."

Falgate followed to the other side of the room, and Arrah Neil rose and joined them, while Annie Walton seated herself beside her aunt, and Lord Beverley took a seat placed on the other side of Lady Margaret's chair, engaging her attention by an account of their walk. Nor was it accidentally that he did so; for he knew that at that moment, though the fine countenance of the old dame was calm, there were many thoughts and memories, many doubts and hopes, busy in her bosom—far too busy for her peace. In the meantime he turned his eyes every now and then towards the window, against which appeared the fine and dignified form of Lord Walton, the light of evening shining full upon his lordly brow and chiselled features, and the sweet profile of Arrah Neil, with the graceful outline of her figure, all in deep shade. The painter seemed speaking eagerly as they listened, and from time to time Charles Walton bent his head or asked a question; while Arrah Neil, her face inclined towards the ground, once or twice raised her handkerchief to her eyes, and seemed to wipe away a tear. At length the painter drew forth from his pocket a small packet (which he placed in Lord Walton's hands), and a slip of paper, which he held while the young nobleman eagerly examined the contents of the packet. They seemed various, some of them being letters and scraps of parchment, some small trinkets. While he gazed upon them all, one after the other, Charles Walton gave them to Arrah Neil—first, however, drawing her arm through his own, as if to support her. Then, taking the paper from Falgate's

hand, he attentively read what was written on it; and, turning once more to his fair companion, he kissed her tenderly, adding a few words, the last of which sounded like "my dear cousin."

Lady Margaret Langley caught them and started up, but instantly resumed her seat; and Lord Walton, taking Arrah's hand in his, while he supported her trembling steps with his arm, led her forward to the old lady's chair. The fair girl sank upon her knees, and bent her head before Lady Margaret, while in a low and solemn voice the young nobleman said,—

"My dear aunt, it is as you have dreamed. This sweet girl is your child's child."

Lady Margaret said not a word, but cast her arms round Arrah Neil, bent her brow upon her fair neck, and wept in silence; then raised her tearful eyes towards heaven, and sobbed aloud. The old stag-hound, too, as if he comprehended all and shared in all, approached, and with a low whine licked his mistress's withered hand. She speedily grew calm, however, and looking up to her nephew, without taking her arm from Arrah's neck, she asked,—

"But is it all true, Charles? Is it all proved? Is she the heiress of my house?"

"Nothing but a few minute links in the chain of evidence are wanting," replied Lord Walton; "and quite enough is proved, my dear aunt, to leave no doubt whatever on our minds, as I will show you, though other papers indeed are wanting at present, which might be needful to establish her rights and legitimacy in a court of law. Whatever may be its decision, however, to us she must be ever our own dear cousin, Arabella Tyrone."

"Ah, no, no!" cried the poor girl, starting up and clasping her hands; "still Arrah Neil to you, Charles—to all of you, still Arrah Neil!"

Lord Walton gazed on her with a look of earnest tenderness, and a faint smile crossed his fine lip. Perhaps he thought that, whatever was her name for the time, she would soon be Arabella Walton; but he would not agitate her more at that moment, and was about to proceed with the account he was rendering to Lady Margaret, when Lord Beverley advanced and extended his arms to Arrah Neil. She gazed upon him in surprise; but he pressed her to his bosom warmly, eagerly, and kissed her brow, exclaiming,—

"Fear not, dear child! fear not! The same blood flows in your veins as in mine. I am not deceived, Lady Margaret—her father was my mother's brother. Is it not so?"

"It is," said Lady Margaret. "Ask me no questions yet, my child. He is your cousin, and he and his have forgiven me and mine. I trust that God has forgiven us, and you may have to do so too when you hear all. Say, will you do it, Arrah?"

The fair girl fell upon her neck and kissed her; and Annie Walton then claimed her share of tenderness, though to her the tale had been developed more gradually, and was not heightened by surprise.

It was a strange and touching scene, however, even to one who witnessed it, like the poor painter, without any personal interest in the recovery of the lost lamb; and Falgate's eyes were as full of tears as those of the rest when he was called forward by Lord Walton to give an account of how he had found the packet which he had brought that day. His tale was somewhat confused, and the particulars need not be related here, as the reader is already acquainted with them; but when he spoke of the account given by the good hostess of the inn, and pointed out the facts she had written down — when he detailed his visit to the vault and the opening of the coffin — Lady Margaret Langley sobbed aloud, exclaiming,—

"My child! oh, my child! Ah! didst thou die so near me, and no mother's hand to close thine eyes?"

When she had somewhat recovered, however, she took the tokens and the papers which had been found in the coffin, and gazed upon them, one after the other, with many a sad comment. There were two rings she recollected well. One she had given herself, and a small gold circlet for the brow. It was on her child's sixteenth birthday, she said, the last she ever spent within her father's halls. Then she read the certificate of marriage, and a short statement of events, in a hand that she knew too well, wiping the bitter drops from her eyes that she might see the words; and then she kissed the name written below, and, drawing Arrah to her heart, embraced her long. At length she looked round and asked,—

"What is there wanting, Charles? All doubt is done away."

"To us it is, my dear aunt," answered Lord Walton; "but the law will require proof that this dear girl, so long called Arrah Neil, is the same as the child whom old Sergeant Neil brought from Hull to Bishop's Merton many years ago. Those proofs, I hope, will soon be found. Indeed, I expected that they would have been brought hither ere now. Some strange delay has taken place, but doubtless some mere accident has caused it; and at all events we are satisfied."

Miss Walton whispered something to her brother as he ended, to which he replied quickly,—

"You are right, Annie; I will do it. Stay with my aunt, and cheer her till we return. There is a tale to be told to this dear girl," he said, speaking to Lady Margaret, "which is too sad for you to tell. Let me do it, my dear aunt—I know all the facts."

"Ay, but not the feelings, Charles," replied the old lady; "yet do so if you will. I can tell the rest hereafter, when I am calmer, for this will pass away. I never thought to have shed tears again. I fancied the fountains were dried up. Tell her, Charles, tell her; but not here."

"No; I will speak with her in the dining-hall," replied Lord Walton. "Come, dear Arrah. It is better to perform a painful task at once;" and taking her hand he led her from the room.

CHAPTER XLVI.

It was a large old hall, lined with black oak. The sun was setting, but setting in splendour; and the rich rosy light poured in through the windows, casting a faint glow upon the old carved wreaths and glistening panels.

"Perhaps," said Lord Walton, as they entered and he closed the door, "I had better order them to bring lights, dear Arrah, for the sun will be down ere my tale is told."

"Oh no," answered Arrah Neil; "there will be light enough for so sad a story as this must be; and we can sit in this window, where we can see the last look of day."

Her cousin led her to one of those old-fashioned window-seats where many of us have sat in our own youth, and took his place beside his fair companion, gazing with her for a moment upon the evening sky. At length, with a start, as if he had forgotten for a time the cause of their coming, he said,—

"But to my tale, Arrah. Many years ago, my poor aunt fancied herself the happiest of women—far from courts and crowds, in the midst of wild scenes that suited her turn of mind, with a husband who loved her deeply, and a daughter whom they both adored. Sir Richard was, however, a soldier of much renown, and in the wars of Ireland he carried Lady Margaret and their child to Dublin. They there became first acquainted with a young Irish nobleman, nearly related to that great man—for I must call him so, though he was a rebel—the celebrated Earl of Tyrone. Your mother was then but a child, dear Arrah, and this nobleman a youth; but after the return of Sir Richard and his wife to Langley Hall he came to visit his eldest sister, who was then married to the Earl of Beverley. Near neighbourhood produced intimacy; but the Irish noble and the English knight differed on many a point—in mere opinion, it is true; but the effect was such, that when the young man asked the hand of the old man's daughter, it was refused with some discourtesy. Lady Margaret herself would not hear of such a marriage, though rank, station, and fortune, all were his; but she loved not to part with her daughter, and still less to part with her for a land which she looked upon as barbarous and full of strife. Your father, Arrah, was rash and vehement, impatient of opposition and easily moved to every daring deed, though generous, kind, and full of honour. He had gained your mother's love, too, and he knew it; and when he left Langley Hall, rejected in his suit, he vowed that six months should not pass ere she should be his bride. Not six weeks went by when, after going out to walk, sad and lonely, as had become her custom, she did not return. Search was made, but she could not be found, and no certain information was to be obtained. One man had heard a distant cry; one had seen a ship hovering on the coast hard by, and several had met a troop of men—strangers, evidently, both from their dress and language—wandering near Langley Hall. A few weeks of terrible suspense passed, and then Lady Margaret received a letter in her daughter's hand, signed 'Arabella Tyrone.' It told of her marriage with him she loved, and that love was openly acknowledged. There was, indeed, a vague hint given that she had not gone willingly, nor intentionally disobeyed her parents; but no details were afforded.

"The answer was written in anger, bidding her neither see them nor write to them more; and Sir Richard, remembering the vow of him who was now his son-in-law, swore that he would find a time to make him beg for pardon on his knees. Years passed ere that bitter vow could be exercised. Your father, for the sake of an adored wife, bent his spirit to sue by letter for forgiveness and oblivion of the past; but that did not satisfy the stern old man, and at length his time came. Fresh troubles broke out in Ireland. Sir Richard Langley received a fresh command; and against your father—then, alas! preparing to take arms against the Government—he chiefly urged an expedition. That country has always had divisions and feuds in its own bosom; and a party of the enemies of Tyrone were easily found to join their efforts to a small body of regular troops, and guide them through the passes to your father's castle."

"I remember it well," said Arrah Neil, "and the terrace looking to the mountains."

"When Sir Richard found that he whom he sought was absent with his wife and child," continued Lord Walton, "and that there was likely to be the most desperate resistance without fruit, he was inclined to pause, and perhaps might have retreated; but those with whom he was now acting overruled his will. They would not hear of delay or hesitation, with their enemy's hold before them. He remonstrated in vain; the attack commenced; and, though he took no part therein, and likewise restrained his men, he had the grief of seeing his daughter's dwelling taken, pillaged, and burned to the ground before his eyes. There, alas! perished, dear Arrah, the poor sister of my friend your cousin; and the sight of her blackened remains, which at first he would hardly believe were not yours, though he had before been told were not there, turned the heart of Sir Richard Langley to more charitable thoughts. He repented bitterly, but the cup of his chastisement was not yet full. Your father, after having seen your mother and yourself embark to seek refuge in Holland, was taken by a party of the old

knight's troops, demanded by the Government as a State prisoner, and, in spite of every effort, remonstrance, prayer, and petition, was tried and executed as a traitor. Pardon me, dear Arrah, that I speak such harsh words, and do so without trying to soften them, for I wish to be as brief as may be."

Arrah Neil wept, but made no answer, and Lord Walton went on :—

"Amongst those who most earnestly entreated for your father's life were Sir Richard Langley and my aunt, Lady Margaret ; but those were times, Arrah, when pampered sovereignty had never known the softening touch of adversity, and flatterers and knaves were heard when the honest and true were scorned. Nought availed, and the old knight gave himself up to bitter remorse. Your poor mother was sought for, and every post took a letter to some one of those lands which it was supposed she might have visited ; but no such person was found, and at length a vague rumour reached Langley Hall that she and her child were dead. Whence it came, what was its foundation, no one could discover ; but as year rolled on after year, and no tidings arrived, the report was credited. The old man accused himself of murdering his daughter and her husband ; inflicted on himself strange and superstitious punishments ; and though poor Lady Margaret, knowing that her heart was not burdened with the deeds that had taken place, bore her sad bereavement more tranquilly, yet she could not altogether exculpate herself from the charge of harshness, and she shared in all his penitence and took part in all his grief. Though remorse often goes with long life, yet such was not the case here. Sir Richard Langley died after four or five years of unavailing regret, and Lady Margaret remained as you have seen her—changed, very much changed, from what she once was, but yet with fine and noble principles at heart. She was always of a somewhat wild and enthusiastic temper of mind, and that disposition has deviated of late into great eccentricity of character. The thing that she has most loved and cherished, if not the only thing, has been that faithful dog, which was saved when young from the burning castle of your poor father, and which on the night of your arrival displayed such strange signs of recognition."

"Oh, I remember him well now !" replied Arrah Neil ; "there was a sunny bank below the terrace, near a small lake, and I used to lie with my little arms round his shaggy neck, and laugh when in play he bit at the curls of my hair. It seems but as yesterday, now that the dark mist has been removed from my memory. But go on, Charles ; I do but stop you."

Lord Walton had fallen into a reverie ; a sweet one it was, to which he had been led by the picture that she drew of her fair self in infancy. He thought he saw her on the flowery bank, at sport with her rough companion, and he might have paused to gaze long at the pleasant sight, had not her words roused him.

"I have no more to tell, dear Arrah," he replied ; "the rest of your fate and history you know better than I do ; but yet there is one point—"

He stopped and gazed upon her, as far as the fading light would let him do so, and his heart beat more than he had thought anything on earth could have made it do. Arrah Neil raised her eyes with a look of inquiry to his face ; but the inquiry was instantly answered by what she saw there, and with a cheek of crimson she withdrew her glance as soon as it was given.

"Arrah," said Lord Walton in a low and agitated tone, "I have loved you long—longer, I now find, than I myself have known. Ay, Arrah, I have loved you from childhood ; and lately I have thought, have hoped, have dreamed, perhaps, that you loved me."

Arrah Neil was silent for a moment—only a moment ; but she did nothing like any one else ; and, once more raising her eyes to his face, she laid her soft hand on his and asked, "Whom have I ever loved but you ?" and then the tears rolled over the long lashes and diamonded her cheek.

Charles Walton had felt in those few brief moments as he had never felt before—as he had never imagined that he could feel. He, the calm, the firm, the strong-minded, had felt timid as a child before the cottage-girl, the object of his long bounty, the partaker of his house's charity ; and he knew from that strange sensation how powerful was the love within him ; while she, though agitated, though moved, gained from the very pure singleness of the one strong passion which had dwelt in her breast for years that strength to avow it which he seemed scarcely able to command.

But that avowal, once made on her part,—though he knew it, though he could not doubt it before,—at once restored him to himself again ; and, casting his arms round her, he called her his own dear bride.

A few minutes passed in sweet emotions—in words so broken and confused that they would seem nonsense if here written—in signs and tokens of the heart which form a sacred language that ought not to be transcribed. But then Charles Walton spoke of his sister's approaching marriage, and urged that she whom he loved would that day put the seal upon their fate also.

Arrah turned pale and shook her head ; and when her lover, with soothing words and kind assurances, sought to remove what he believed to be the mere timid scruples of a young heart to so hasty a marriage, she answered,—

"No, Charles, no ! it is not that. I would not so ill repay your generous kindness ; I would not so badly return my benefactor's love. But I cannot—no, I cannot—I ought not—nay, I dare not unite my fate with yours till all doubt is removed of who and what I am. Oh, Charles, I love you deeply ! You know it—you must have seen it ; but yet, in truth and deep sincerity, I tell you that, even if you had

condescended to wed the poor, wild peasant girl, as you knew her long ago, Arrah Neil had too much love for Charles Walton to let him so degrade himself. No; as your equal by birth, however much inferior in mind and every other quality, I am yours when you will. I will not say a word; I will not plead even for a day's delay; but there must be no doubt—it must be all proved."

"My dearest Arrah," replied her lover tenderly, "I have no doubt. All is clear—all is proved to me."

"But not to the world, Charles—not to the world," she answered. "You have yourself admitted it; and you must not—indeed you must not urge me, if you would not make me unhappy—unhappy either to refuse aught that you ask or to do that which I think wrong."

Still he would have persuaded, but she gazed at him reproachfully, saying, "Oh, Charles, forbear!" and he felt her heart beat violently beneath his arm.

"Well, then, Arrah," he said in a somewhat mournful tone, "remember, my beloved, you have promised that whenever these papers can be found—and I trust that will be soon—or that your birth be by any other means clearly established, you will be mine without delay."

"The instant that you ask me," replied Arrah Neil; and shortly after Charles Walton led her back to the arms of Lady Margaret Langley. He left her there, hurried out to the houses where his men were lodged, and, seeking out old Major Randal, bade him to send a small party in the direction of Bishop's Merton, with orders to inquire for Captain Barecolt at every village on the way.

"In that part of the country," he said, anticipating the old soldier's objections, "I find that the Parliamentary party dare not show their faces, and there can be no danger of a surprise. Lord Hertford's people keep the Roundheads down."

"Oh, I have no objection, my good lord," answered Major Randal drily. "I could as ill spare Barecolt as your lordship, though he has been too much absent from his troop of late; but if it be for his majesty's service, I have nought to say. However, in time of need he always proves himself a good soldier, and in time of idleness he amuses me, which few things do nowadays. I can hardly make him out yet, after having known him ten years or more; for I never knew any one but himself who was a braggart and a brave man, a liar and an honest one. However, I will send out a party to-night, as your lordship seems anxious."

The old officer went forth to do as he proposed; but Lord Walton did not return at once to his dwelling, as might be supposed. On the contrary, he remained in Major Randal's quarters, buried in deep thought, so intense, so absorbing, that several persons came and went without his perceiving them. For months he had struggled against the passion in his bosom. He had struggled successfully, not to crush, but to restrain it; and, like a dammed-up torrent, it had gone on increasing in power behind the barrier that confined it, till, now that the obstacle was removed, it rushed forth with overwhelming power. There was an eager, a vehement, an almost apprehensive longing to call her he loved his own, which can only be felt by a strong spirit that has resisted its own impulses. There was a fear that it never would be—a vague impression that some unforeseen impediment, some change, some danger,—nay, perhaps, death itself,—would interpose and forbid it; and when he roused himself with a start, he resolved to urge Arrah with every argument to cast aside all her scruples and be his at once.

He found her seated by Lady Margaret, the old woman's hand in hers and the stag-hound's head upon her knee, and there evidently had been agitating but tender words passing; for Arrah's eyes were full of tears, though there was a sweet smile upon her lip. Charles Walton was too full of his errand for any concealment: he told Lady Margaret all, and besought her to join her persuasions to his, which she did joyfully. But the fair girl resisted,—gently, sweetly, yet firmly,—even though he spoke of the chances of his own death. The thought brought bright drops into her eyes again; but still she besought him not to ask her, and looked so mournfully in his face when he seemed to doubt her love, that he was once more forced to yield.

What was it that made her resolute against his wishes,—ay, against the dearest feelings of her own heart? There was a dread, a fancy, that, if she became Charles Walton's wife, and the proofs of her birth should never be discovered, he might regret what he had done; that he might wish the words unspoken, the bond of their union broken. She did not do him full justice, but the very idea was agony; and though she knew that, whatever he might feel in such a case, he was too generous to let her perceive his regret, yet she saw sufficiently into her own heart to be sure that she should doubt and fear, and that no peace, no joy, would ever be hers, if in her marriage to him there was one cause which could produce reasonable regret.

CHAPTER XLVII.

It was a bright sunny morning, when, walking forth, as if for some mere morning's excursion, the Earl of Beverley, with Lady Margaret Langley leaning on his arm, and Lord Walton with his sister, took their way to the old church in Shrewsbury. Arrah Neil, with old Major Randal, and one or two of the servants, had

gone a different way; for Annie Walton, though the customs of those days were different, did not wish, in the midst of civil war, confusion, and bloodshed, to chequer sadder scenes with the spectacle of a gay wedding. One by one they entered the church. There was no gazing crowd to witness. All was quiet, and even solemn; but the bright smile of the morning cheered the fair bride's heart, and lent to imagination an augury of happy hours. The ceremony was soon over; and Lord Walton gave his sister to his friend, undoubtedly with joy and satisfaction; yet he could not refrain one bitter sigh, or forbear from turning his eyes sadly and reproachfully to Arrah Neil; but that glance was met by so tender, so imploring a look from that fair and speaking face, that he easily read in it that to hold her resolution cost her as much as it cost him.

Four or five days passed after sweet Annie Walton had become the wife of Lord Beverley, and still no news had been received from Bishop's Merton. The king had returned some time before to Shrewsbury; many bodies of men had flocked to his standard; reports favourable to his cause had been rife; risings in his favour on the road to London had been rumoured; and news had been received that under the very walls of Worcester Prince Rupert's fiery horse had defeated a superior party of the enemy. Every one began to speak of a speedy advance towards the capital, and all seemed glad of the prospect except Charles Walton. At length the order for preparation was given, and all was bustle and activity. Lord Walton proposed to his aunt to remain with her he loved at Shrewsbury, but Lady Margaret answered,—

"No, Charles; I will follow you as near as I can; and if I know Arrah aright, she would not stay behind. As soon as you know the direction of your march we will set out, and perhaps may be your harbingers to prepare your quarters for you. I fear not, my dear boy. These Roundheads are not anthropophagi, and will not eat up women and children."

The royal army marched on the following morning, the 12th October; but for ten days Arrah Neil only saw her lover once, at Bridgenorth, and Annie Walton only once saw her husband; for, though the king's leave was given that he should remain for a fortnight more with his bride at Longnar, even love could not keep him from his duty, and love and duty both taught her to follow where he went.

No news was heard of an enemy; the march of the king's force was unopposed, and the only inconvenience that was experienced was the frequent want of good provisions: for the false reports industriously spread by the agents of the Parliament induced the people of the country to believe that the Cavaliers plundered wherever they went. Day by day, however, Arrah Neil or her fair cousin received letters or messengers from the army, and this was consolation under any privation; till at length, towards the end of October, the small party of ladies, with the servants that attended them, reached the village of South Newington, a few miles from Banbury, and obtained lodging at a large old farmhouse in the neighbourhood, close on the banks of the little Sarbrook. They were indeed glad to find shelter, for the weather was cold and stormy; and the good farmer received them willingly enough, and prayed the king might prosper; for the vicinity of a Parliamentary garrison in Banbury had taught the peasantry, though somewhat late in the day, that gross tyranny can be exercised in the name of liberty, and bitter injustice practised by those who have ever equity on their lips. It was about three in the afternoon when they reached the farm-house, and, while hasty preparations were being made for their accommodation, which the extent of the building rendered not very difficult, Arrah Neil stood at the window gazing out upon the fields, the sky, and the stream. Heavy leaden clouds hung overhead, and shut out the blue of heaven and the beams of the sun; a dull grey shower was pouring down upon the earth, dimming the bright colouring of the autumnal foliage; the stream ran turbid, with a sad and solemn murmur, and the hoarse wind howled as it passed the casement. Her thoughts were as gloomy as the scene, and something like the dark shadow which used formerly to come over her seemed to rest upon her spirit. The old stag-hound stalked up and put his muzzle in her hand, but she noticed him not; the servants came and went, but she saw them not; Lady Margaret spoke, but her ears did not catch the sounds. At length Lady Beverley pronounced her name, and Arrah Neil started, for the tones were like those of Lord Walton; and she was turning round to reply when her eye caught sight of two Cavaliers riding into the court. A look of joy instantly spread over her face, and she exclaimed,—

"Oh, Annie, dear Annie! there is Captain Barecolt, and Charles will be happy now!"

As soon as he could spring from his horse and find his way up the stairs, Captain Barecolt was in the room. He was very pale and very thin, and Annie Walton thought for a moment that he must be the bearer of evil tidings, but his well-satisfied smile soon set her fears at rest.

"What news, what news, sir?" exclaimed Lady Margaret, who had shared the apprehensions of her niece.

"None but what is good, madam," replied the captain. "Lord Walton has honoured me by making me his messenger from Edgecot, where he is now with his majesty. No enemy is near; Banbury is about to be besieged, and consequently cavalry is out of fashion; so we shall have three or four days' repose, for they will doubtless hold out that time for their honour; and, to say truth, I myself shall not be sorry for a little rest, having been let blood pretty sharply since I stood last in this fair

presence. I can bear bleeding, methinks, as well as most men, being somewhat accustomed to the process; but this Master Dry of Longsoaken was an unskilful leech, and took so much that there was very little left, and I was obliged to lie in bed at Chippenham for ten days."

"But you are wet, Captain Barecolt, and fatigued," said Lady Beverley. "Will you take some refreshment?"

"Not before I have done my errand, bright lady," replied the officer; "which is simply to tell you that my Lord Walton and your noble lord will be here with all speed, and to give this packet to another fair lady, in whose cause I have laboured and suffered successfully;" and, approaching Arrah Neil, who had been listening with eager attention to every word that fell from his lips, he kissed her hand and gave her her lover's letter.

She took and read it eagerly, while her heart beat fast and her brain almost turned giddy with joy.

"My own Beloved,"—it ran,—"Barecolt joined me last night, delayed by accidents which he will tell you. He brings with him all the papers which were plundered from the cottage of poor old Neil; and they, beyond all question, together with the others we possess, establish your birth and your rights. I enclose them for your comfort. Show them to Lady Margaret; and, dearest Arrah, remember the promise that you made to me. We halt here for three days. I will be with you in an hour, not to part with you again till you are the bride of him who loves you more than life.

"Charles Walton."

Arrah paused for a moment or two and leaned upon the table. Her hand that held the letter shook, and her cheek glowed; but there was a light in her beautiful eyes and a smile upon her sweet lip. Then, calmly gliding forward to Lady Margaret, she gave her the papers which her lover's letter had contained, saying, "Now indeed I am beyond all doubt your child."

Then, turning to her cousin, she placed Charles Walton's letter in her hand, gazing on her face while she read it with a look calm, but full of many thoughts and feelings. Lady Beverley, when she had done, cast her arm round her, whispering, "My dear Arrah, now I think he has a right to expect—"

"Everything that love and gratitude can prompt," replied her fair companion. "I would not thwart him even in a thought, Annie. To you, sir," she continued, speaking aloud, and addressing Captain Barecolt, "I owe an infinite debt, which I must trust to those who can acquit it better to acknowledge fully and discharge. But indeed, Annie, he needs tendance and refreshment. See, Lady Margaret is moved; will you order him what is needful?"

"By your permission, fair ladies, I will even take care of myself," answered the redoubtable captain: "it is a trade I am accustomed to, I can assure you; and wherever bread and bacon, ale and wine, are to be found, I am quite equal to find them out."

"Pray do, sir, pray do," said Lady Beverley; and Captain Barecolt left them to themselves.

The moments that intervened before the arrival of those who were expected were full of agitation. The papers which Barecolt had recovered from the house of Dry of Longsoaken were carefully examined, and the full proofs of Arrah's birth were found beyond all doubt. Amongst the rest were several letters of Lady Margaret and her daughter, and a letter from the husband of the latter to his unhappy wife on the day preceding his execution. Besides these were several documents, showing that the small sum which had been annually paid to Sergeant Neil proceeded from a cousin of the poor girl's father, who had embraced the ecclesiastical profession, and was the abbot of a monastery on the Continent. He, O'Donnell, and old Neil himself, were the only persons entrusted with the secret of Arrah's birth; but it appeared from one of the letters of a late date that the Abbé Tyrone was still living; so that, if any further testimony had been required, he could have furnished it. Beneath these papers was a parchment, freshly written, signed, and sealed by the king, and countersigned by the proper officers, reversing the attainder of poor Arrah's father, and declaring the confiscated estates restored. A momentary gleam of light beamed forth upon her dark fate—how soon to be eclipsed again!

Some half-hour was thus consumed, but then the thoughts of all turned happily to the expected arrival of those they loved. Ere an hour after Captain Barecolt's arrival had passed, Arrah Neil placed herself once more at the window to watch for their coming. She had not gazed long through the decreasing light when her ear caught the sound of horses' feet, and in a moment after Charles Walton and the earl, followed by a few servants, rode up at a quick pace. They were accompanied, however, by another gentleman in a black cassock and a cloak to keep him from the rain, and the poor girl's heart fluttered wildly at the sight. But, still giving way to the impulse, she only paused to exclaim, "Here they are, dear Annie!" and, running down to the door, was soon in Charles Walton's arms.

"Dear one! dear one!" said the young nobleman as he pressed her to his heart, reading her deep love in her eyes; "I have come to put you to a trial, my Arrah, and see whether you will keep your promise frankly."

"To the letter, and with pleasure, Charles," replied Arrah Neil, in a low murmur that reached no ear but his.

"To-night?" asked Lord Walton. "The king's chaplain must return. All forms are already cleared away."

"This very hour, if you desire it," answered she whom he loved; "your lightest wish is my law, henceforth till death."

Charles Walton could not reply, but, taking her hand, he led her to the chaplain, and then

conducted him under her guidance to the room above.

We need not pause upon explanations. All was soon arranged and determined. After a brief and sober meal, and with none but one or two of the servants and Captain Barecolt present, the party formed a circle round, and the chaplain opened the book. In the silence that succeeded the howling of the wind and the pattering of the rain were heard, and Arrah Neil turned an anxious glance towards the casement; for, though her bosom was full of deep and strong emotions, there was something in the sound that seemed to connect itself with them. Charles Walton saw but her, thought of her alone; and after a brief pause the chaplain went on. Word by word he read the whole service through; the vow was plighted, the ring was on the finger; and, with joy he had feared that he might never know, Charles Walton held Arrah Neil to his bosom as his wife.

* * * * *

Silence had spread over the world for some hours. It was between two and three in the morning, and as dark as the grave, when first a horse's foot was heard coming at full speed, and then came loud knocking at the door. All those who slept roused themselves, and in a few minutes there were steps upon the stairs. The voice of Captain Barecolt was then heard speaking to the Earl of Beverley.

"The king has sent, my lord," he said, "to order us to draw to a rendezvous on the top of Edgehill, near Kineton. Lord Essex is in force in the valley below, and it is resolved to give him battle. We will cut him to mince-meat."

"Tell Lord Walton," said the voice of the earl; "knock at the opposite door;" but ere Captain Barecolt could follow these directions the young lord came out, partly dressed.

"See that the horses be fed instantly, Barecolt," said Charles Walton, "and have them saddled. I will join you in a few minutes," and he retired. His bride rose and cast her arms around him in silence.

"Nay, Arrah, dear Arrah! I must go where my king commands," he said, struggling against the feelings of his own heart.

"I know it, Charles," she answered in a far calmer tone than he had expected; "I would not keep you for aught on earth. But let me go with you, my dear husband. I shall have no fear; I will stay upon some hill, as I did once before, and witness my hero fighting for his king."

"Impossible, impossible, dear girl!" he replied; "this is a very different affair. To-night I trust, in God's mercy, to return and tell you that we have won the victory and regained our monarch's throne. It must be so indeed, my beloved; you know not what you ask."

Arrah paused in sad and silent thought for a moment, and then said, "Well, let me be with you to the last before you go;" and, dressing herself hastily, she followed him down. Lady Beverley was soon by her side; few words were spoken; all was quick preparation; and ere four o'clock, with pale, anxious faces, those two fair girls took one more embrace, and saw their husbands ride away into the darkness. It had ceased raining, but it was bitter cold, and the wind blew sharply in; yet they gazed forth as long as even fancy could show the receding forms, and then, linked arm and arm, they retired to Lady Beverley's room to pray, each asking her own heart the question she did not dare to utter aloud, "Who will return? who rest upon the field?" There was a faint streak of grey in the sky when they parted, and Annie counselled her fair cousin to lie down and try to sleep.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE morning of Sunday, the 21st of October, broke dull and cold; the grey clouds swept hurriedly over the sky, like charging squadrons, and the wind whistled through the branches of a solitary clump of old beeches, which marked the highest point of the sharp rise called Edgehill. From the brow might be seen a wide open slope, extending down nearly to the little town of Keinton, or Kineton, with some flat meadows at the bottom, having a number of hedges and enclosures on the left as one looked from the hill. On the other side all was at that time open, and the fair undulations of Warwickshire might be seen beyond, the brown woods clothed in a light mist. It was a peaceful and pleasant scene in the grey morning notwithstanding the coldness and dulness of the day; and very soon after dawn the pale blue smoke began to rise from the early chimneys of the little town, rising slowly till it was caught by the wind from the hill, and then hurrying away with a few light rolls and losing itself in air.

Shortly after, a drum was heard to beat below, and then came the blast of a trumpet, and soon troops might be descried forming slowly and quietly in the plain, as if about to commence a safe and easy march. Horse and foot took their places in long line, and here and there officers and camp-followers were seen walking carelessly about, while at the other spots some more rigid disciplinarians might be observed putting their men into better order, and galloping hither and thither in all the bustle of command.

Suddenly, however, some confusion was observed in one part of the plain, where a group of gentlemen on horseback had been visible for some time; and two persons detached themselves from the rest, and rode up at full speed towards the brow of the hill, towards which all

eyes were now turned. What saw they there which caused such apparent surprise? It was a small party of horse, not more than twenty in number, which had just moved up from the other side, and now halted, gazing into the valley. There were scarfs, and plumes, and glittering arms amongst them, betokening no peaceful occupation; and after a moment's pause a trumpeter mounted on a grey horse put his instrument to his lips and blew a long, loud blast. The next moment fresh heads appeared above the hedge, and troop after troop rode forward, and in fair array took up a position at the summit.

All was changed on the plain below in a moment; activity and temporary confusion succeeded the quiet regularity which before had been observable. The two horsemen who had been detached to the group in front were hurriedly recalled; musketeers were seen filing off to the left; the cavalry was collected on the wings; the foot began to form line in the centre; and the party which had remained a little in advance were discovered moving slowly along quite across the valley, while from time to time a horseman dashed away from it, and seemed to convey orders to this or that regiment in different parts of the field.

Essex was now first aware of the presence of an enemy, and easily divined that he could march no further without fighting; but it is more with those above that we have to do. Soon after the small body of Cavaliers on the hill had been discovered by the Roundhead army, up came at headlong speed, followed by some eight or ten gentlemen who could pace with him, a fiery-looking youth, with his beaver up and his eye lightening with eager impetuosity. He seemed barely one-and-twenty years of age; but there was on his brow the look of habitual command; and in the quick roll of his eye over the Parliamentary army, the sudden pause it made here and there, and then its rapid turn towards another point, one might see how closely he scanned the forces of the enemy,—how keenly he observed all that seemed worthy of attention.

"They see us, your highness," said one of the gentlemen who had arrived before him. "They were actually commencing their march when we appeared."

"They would not have marched far, my lord," replied Prince Rupert; "but 'tis as well as it is. There are more of them than I thought, but we must make valour supply numbers. I heard that they had left two regiments behind at Stratford."

"There are, sir, two of infantry and one of cavalry," replied Lord Walton; "but that seems to me the best of all reasons for giving battle as soon as possible."

"The very best," answered the prince, with a smile. "Victory is more needful to us than food, and of that we have had no great plenty. But, by my life, there is not a regiment of foot within sight! The foot are sad encumbrances. Would that these times were like the days of old, when every gentleman fought on horseback! We are fallen upon vulgar days."

"I see the head of a regiment amongst those distant hedges," said the Earl of Beverley, "but our quarters were very much scattered last night."

"And some noble persons had fair young wives to visit, my good lord," replied the prince, bowing his head, with a smile.

"True," rejoined the earl; "but yet your highness sees they are not the last in the field; as how should they be, when they have such treasures to defend—such eyes for witnesses?"

The reply suited the prince well; and after some more gay conversation, he dismounted from his horse and seated himself under one of the beech-trees, watching attentively every movement of the enemy, and from time to time pointing out to those around him the measures taken by Lord Essex for defence.

"See!" he said; "he is filling those hedges with musketeers. Aston and his dragoons must clear them. I will not break my teeth upon such stones. He is forming a powerful reserve there, I suppose, under Ramsay or the Earl of Bedford, and he has got all his foot in the centre. Who is that on their left, I wonder? Well, I shall soon know, for I trust it will not be long before I see him closer. Would to heaven these tardy foot would come! We are giving him full time for every arrangement he could desire, and you may be sure he will not stir from amongst those hedges till we dislodge him."

But the impatient prince had long to wait, for ten o'clock was near at hand ere the first regiment of royal artillery was on the ground. From that time, indeed, every quarter of an hour brought up some fresh body; but even then the men had marched far and needed some refreshment. All that could be given them was a brief space of repose and some cold water, for provisions were not to be obtained. The soldiery, however, were full of ardour, and many a gay jest and gibe passed amongst those who were never destined to quit that plain.

Amongst other events that have been noticed by historians is the fact that the king's guard, composed entirely of gentlemen volunteers, having heard as they followed the monarch some slight scoffs at their peculiar post near his person, besought him to dispense with their close attendance that day, and obtained permission to charge with the cavalry of Prince Rupert on the right. On the left a smaller body of horse, commanded by Commissary-General Wilmot, and a regiment of dragoons under Sir Arthur Aston, had the task of assailing the right of the Parliamentary army, protected as it was by enclosures lined with musketeers; and to this service the small corps of the Earl of Beverley was also assigned. Lord Walton fought upon the right under the prince; and but one regiment of cavalry, led by Sir John Byron, was kept back as a reserve.

One o'clock had passed, when at length, after a short consultation with the Earl of Lindsay, the king commanded his forces to march slowly down the hill towards Kineton. The distance was considerable; and before the ground was reached on which it was thought advisable to begin the battle, the day had so far advanced that some old and experienced officers suggested a delay till the following morning. But sufficient arguments were not wanting to show that Essex must gain and his sovereign lose by such a course. The troops, too, were eager to engage; and a very general belief prevailed that few of the Parliamentary regiments would really be brought to fight against their king. In the confusion of all accounts, it is hardly to be discovered how the battle really commenced; but certain it is that Prince Rupert burst into fury at the very thought of delay, and that his force of cavalry first commenced the fight by charging the left of the enemy. As he was waiting to give the word, with all his blood on fire at the thought of the approaching strife, he remarked Lord Walton twice turn round and gaze towards the hill in the rear, and he asked in a sharp tone, "What look you for, my lord? Soldiers ever should look forward."

Charles Walton's brow became dark as night, and it cost him a moment's thought ere he could reply with calmness,—

"I looked, sir, for one I thought I saw upon the hill as we moved down; and as to the rest, Rupert of Bavaria has never been more forward on the field, nor ever will be, than Charles Walton. But there is other matter to attend to now. See you that regiment of horse advancing to the charge?"

The prince looked round, and beheld a considerable body of the enemy coming on at a quick pace, pistol in hand. He raised his sword above his head, about to speak the word; but at that moment the opposite party discharged their shot into the ground, and, galloping on, wheeled their horses into line with the Cavaliers. A buzz ran through the ranks of "Fortescue! Fortescue!" "He was forced to join the Roundheads;" "Many more are in the like case;" and at the same moment the cry of "Charge!" was heard; and, hurled like a thunderbolt against the mass of the enemy's cavalry on the left, with the prince at their head, the gallant force of Cavaliers rushed on. A fire, innocuous from the terror and confusion with which it was directed, was opened upon their advancing line; but ere swords crossed, the Parliamentary cavalry of the left wing, with the exception of one small body, turned the rein and fled. The Cavaliers thundered on the flank and rear; men and horses rolled over together, and foremost in the fight, wherever a show of resistance was made, was the bridegroom of a day.

"Lightning and devils!" cried Captain Barecolt, who followed hard upon his steps. "See what love will make a man do! He has distanced the prince by six horse-lengths, and he will have that standard in a minute. Come, my lord, let a man have his share."

On, on they rushed, pursuers and pursued, along the plain, over the hill; down went steel jack, and buff coat, and iron morion. Some turned at last to strike one stroke for life, but still the fiery spurs of Rupert and of Walton were behind them, and Edgehill field was far away when the prince himself cried,—

"Halt! Sound to the standard! Stay, Walton, stay! you have outstripped me indeed."

Lord Walton drew his rein, but he raised not his visor,[1] for he felt that he was pale.

"Methinks we are too far from the field, your highness," he replied. "I will ride back with speed, for my men have followed close behind me, while you rally the rest and bring them up. I fear some mischance, for the king is without guards."

"Go, go!" said the prince, instantly perceiving the error that had been committed; "I will come after with all speed. Sound trumpet! Sound trumpet! Sound to the standard!"

"Call them back, Barecolt, and follow!" exclaimed Lord Walton. "Old Randal is as mad as any of us. Bring him back quick. I fear we have spoiled the best day's deeds England has seen for long;" and, gathering together what men he could, he spurred headlong back towards the field. Captain Barecolt followed on his steps, and he thought he saw the young lord waver somewhat in the saddle; a stream of blood, too, was trickling down his scarf from his right shoulder, and, spurring on his horse to Charles Walton's side, he said, "You are wounded, sir; you are badly wounded! Let me lead you to—"

But at that moment the field of battle came again before their eyes, and Lord Walton exclaimed,—

"Is this a time to talk of wounds? Look there!"

The aspect of the scene had indeed greatly changed from what it had been some half an hour before, when Wilmot and Aston on the left, and Rupert on the right, were driving the Roundhead cavalry before them. Firm in his position stood the Earl of Essex with his foot. His reserve of horse had come down and were charging the royal infantry. The right wing, the left, and the reserve of Charles's horse were far away, pursuing the flying foe; and the monarch himself, with his two sons, only guarded by a small force of mounted Cavaliers, who had been too wise and loyal to follow the rash example set them by the prince, appeared nearly surrounded by the Parliamentary cavalry under Sir William Balfour.

As Lord Walton reappeared upon the field, the royal standard wavered and fell, and in the

[1] We do not always remember that in the reign of Charles I. the cavalry were in general defended by casques with moveable visors. The dragoons, indeed, had usually an open helmet.

midst of the fierce fire that rolled along the front of the enemy's line, he charged upon the flank of Balfour's horse to rescue his sovereign from the peril he was in. As they galloped up, however, the standard rose again, and Essex's reserve began slowly to retire upon the infantry; but still the young nobleman urged on his little troop upon the retreating force; some fifty gentlemen detached themselves from the small body that surrounded the monarch, and, charging in front, and cutting their way clear through, Charles Walton and Francis of Beverley met in the midst of the *mêlée*.

"How goes it, Charles?" said the earl, with a glad voice. "If the prince would but return, we would have a glorious victory!"

"He is coming quickly," replied Lord Walton. "Rally your force with mine, Beverley, for one more charge;" and in another minute they were again in the midst of the retreating rebels.

At the same moment, in sad confusion and disarray, came back Prince Rupert's Cavaliers. Discipline and order were lost amongst them. Officers were without men, and men without officers. Some few joined the troops of Lord Beverley and Lord Walton.

But night was falling. Sir William Balfour led his horse in between the regiments of infantry steadily and skilfully, then turned to face the enemy; and the earl, finding that nothing could be effected without a larger force, retreated, and galloped up to Prince Rupert, who now stood near the king, to urge one decisive charge upon the centre of the Parliamentary line. The prince received him coldly, however—perhaps from a consciousness that he himself had done amiss; and some one suggested that the king should leave the field, pointing out how firmly Lord Essex kept his ground.

"For shame, for shame!" cried the earl. "The victory might still be ours, but certainly it is not his; and, as long as his majesty remains, it cannot be so. The greater part of our foot is unbroken; our horse is victorious; and, whoever quits the field, I will remain upon it, dead or alive."

"And I too, most certainly, my lord," said Charles. "I will never do so unkingly an act as to forsake them who have forsaken all to serve me. There is no look of victory on my Lord of Essex's side. We keep the field. Let them advance to attack us if they dare. Take measures to withdraw those cannon from that little mound; restore what order may be, for night is falling fast; and set a sure guard, that we be not surprised."

For some time the discharge of musketry, which was still going on, continued upon both sides; but gradually, as the darkness increased, it slackened, revived, slackened again, fell into dropping shots, and then fires began to appear along the line of either army, while all the confusion and disarray which ever succeeds a drawn battle, where the combatants are only parted by the night, took place on either part. Hours were spent in giving some sort of order to the royalist forces; officers sought their men, soldiers looked for their officers, rumours of every kind were spread, and many accidents and misadventures happened, which cannot here be told.

But there was one sad subject of thought that occupied many a mind—"Who had fallen? Who remained wounded on the field?" It was impossible to discover; for the confusion was so great that no one knew where the other was to be found. Lord Beverley, however, had seen Charles Walton almost to the latest moment of the strife, and in sending off a messenger to Newington, to inform his fair bride of his own safety, he ventured to add that her brother also had escaped the slaughter of the day. About midnight, however, as he was lying by a fire, he heard a step approach, and looking up he saw Barecolt beside him.

The soldier's eyes gazed round the group which lay in the glare, and before the earl could speak he said,—

"So he is not here?"

"Do you mean Lord Walton?" asked the earl.

"Ay, to be sure, my lord," replied Barecolt. "I have been seeking you these two hours, and now we had better go and seek him, for depend upon it he is on the field. He was badly wounded with a shot in the side in that first charge, and he got another in the last; but perhaps he is not dead yet. The night is cold, and that stanches blood."

"We have no lights," said the earl, a cold foreboding coming over his heart. "Stay—the moon will be up in half an hour. Where saw you him last?"

"Within half musket-shot of the second regiment on the right," answered Barecolt. "We had better wait, too, till the moon rises. She will give some light, if she do not even chase the clouds; and yet I would fain go soon, for I have strange doubts."

"Of what?" asked the earl.

"Nay, I do not well know," replied the soldier; "but I know one thing—that sweet lady of his was not so far from the field as he wished and others thought. Just as we were moving down, I saw her or her ghost, and a countryman with his hand upon her horse's bridle, as if leading him over the rough ground on the left. Her lord saw her too, or I am mistaken, for he more than once turned to look, and there were words between him and the prince about it."

The earl put his hand to his brow in that sort of painful dread which, without taking any definite form, hangs like a dark cloud over the whole range of destiny.

"You saw her near the field?" he said; "you saw her here? When was this?"

"Why, I told you, my good lord—just as we were moving down, about one of the clock," answered Captain Barecolt; "but there is a little cottage, where a shepherd lives, up along the edge of the hill. Perhaps she has taken refuge there; or, it may be, she has gone back."

"God grant it!" said the earl. "I will send up to the cottage to see if she be there."

Barecolt, however, undertook the task himself, saying that in such a piercing night the walk would warm him. But he found the cottage deserted, and, though there was sufficient light to guide him back to the spot where the Earl of Beverley lay, the moon did not show herself all night, the darkness remained as profound as ever, neither lantern nor torch could be procured, and it was perfectly hopeless to attempt a search under such circumstances. Weary hour by hour passed away beside the fire, till it died away for want of fuel; but still, notwithstanding all the fatigue that they had endured, Lord Beverley and his companion sat wakeful till the dawn of morning, and during their conversation Barecolt showed a depth of feeling and an interest in the fate of Charles Walton and Arrah Neil which raised him much in the opinion of the earl. As soon as the first grey streaks announced the coming day, Lord Beverley was on horseback with his troop; but there before him stood the Parliamentary army, reinforced rather than diminished since the night before. It was impossible to approach the part of the field where Lord Walton had last been seen except with a large force; but four pieces of the enemy's artillery were seen considerably in advance of their line in that direction; and at the suggestion of Barecolt the earl asked and obtained leave to make a charge with his own troop and that of Major Randal, to endeavour to capture some of the cannon. This, as is well known, was effected early in the morning, without much loss or opposition; but the chief object of the earl, the discovering of his friend's body, could not be accomplished.

The rest of the events of that day are familiar to every one. The greater part of the morning was spent in consultations on the Royalist part, and in fruitless endeavours to induce the officers to make one great effort against the enemy, till, towards evening, both armies began to retire, the first movement of retreat being made by the Parliament forces, which were followed for a considerable distance by the Royalist cavalry.

For ten miles the Earl of Beverley joined in the pursuit, but then obtained leave to return to the field, and his sad search began.

It was long protracted, and night was again beginning to fall, when a low, fierce growl, as he walked along one of the hedges on the right, called his attention to a pit which had been dug at the foot of a small oak tree. A little path ran down among some bushes, and, hurrying along it, with Barecolt and several of his men, he reached the bottom.

There they found two or three wounded soldiers, who had dragged themselves thither to die; but in the midst was the saddest sight of all. Prone upon the ground, with the head uncovered, lay the body of Charles Walton; but that head was pillowed on the arm of poor Arrah Neil. Her lips seemed to have been pressed upon his, for her fair face had fallen forward upon his neck, and her bosom rested on his steel cuirass, while her left arm hung over him, the hand half clasping his right. Beside them, gazing down upon the poor girl, with drooping ears and tail, stood the gaunt stag-hound, and the faithful beast turned fiercely upon the first man who approached. He recognised the earl, however, and took a step or two forward towards him with a faint howl, and then returned and gazed again on her with whom he had sported in her childhood.

Lord Beverley knelt down and gently took her hand: it was cold as ice, but there was a keen frost; and he touched her cheek, removing the rich ringlets of her hair which had fallen over her face. There was some warmth left; and, raising her in his arms, he directed her to be carried into the little town of Kineton, now in possession of the Royalist cavalry, with the body of her husband.

But Arrah never spoke again. It was evident that she had come in time to receive the last breath of him she loved, for the fingers of Lord Walton's left hand were found tightly closed upon her garments; but how she had found him, or when, could not be discovered. All that was ever learned was, that one of the ploughmen of the farm at Newington had guided her to Edgehill, and that from the summit she had witnessed the battle below; but at night, as she would not return, the man had left her, and all the rest was darkness. Every effort was made to recall her to herself, but all was in vain; and in about two hours after she had been removed to Kineton the last feeble spark of life that was left went out; and she was buried in the same grave with her husband, in less than a week from her marriage-day.

Such was the fate of one of the fairest and the gentlest of human beings. It would be a sad fact, that virtue and good conduct, that the highest qualities of the mind and the heart, cannot always command success or ensure happiness, but that we have the grand assurance, both in God's Word and in God's goodness, that there is a place where there is compensation and reward. That the very brightest and the very best of human efforts often do not obtain their recompense here has been admitted by the most sceptical of philosophers as a strong evidence of a future state. Our hopes and expectations are founded on a higher and better basis, and we are permitted to see, even in the sorrows of the good, the trial of that faith which is the assurance of immortality.

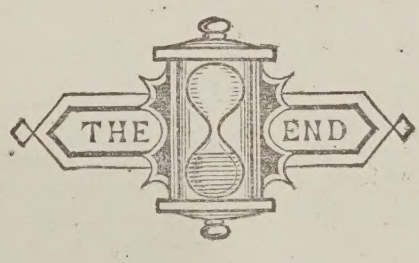
We might well close our history here, and close it in sadness; but, as there are almost always some mitigating circumstances in the course of disastrous events, we may be allowed to take off a little from the tragic character of the conclusion of this tale by speaking of the after history of other persons who have figured in the scene; and the reader is always anxious

more or less to hear the ultimate fate of those in whom he has taken an interest.

To speak of the more important personages, then :—In the first place, it may well be supposed that the Earl of Beverley mourned sincerely for his friend, and his grief was somewhat aggravated by the powers of imagination; for the fact that his persuasions had been the immediate cause of Lord Walton joining the royal standard connected itself closely with the dream which he had had in prison, and brought a shadow over him whenever the events of the day gave him time for thought. He himself went safely through all the scenes of the civil war, remaining uninjured, except from a slight wound which he received at Long Marston Moor. His fair lady followed him as closely as was possible throughout the whole of those eventful times, and she was as happy as unchanging love and affection could make her amidst the disasters of her country and the overthrow of the royal house to which she was attached. The fall of her brother and the death of his gentle bride affected Annie Walton deeply, and it was long ere she regained the original cheerfulness of her character; but that cheerfulness depended as much upon principle as upon mood, and, instead of encouraging grief, she made every effort to regain her serenity.

After the total ruin of the Cavalier party, the earl and his wife retired to France, and continued to live there in almost total seclusion till the restoration of the house of Stuart brought them back to their native land, where, though they met with the neglect which, in those days, as it is in all, was too frequently the reward of good services, they bore it with perfect indifference, happy in mutual affection, and requiring nothing else to complete their felicity.

A short time before they quitted England, Lady Margaret Langley had left the troublous scene in which they were still moving, for the repose of that quiet mansion which she had long looked to only as a place of rest. But there is still one personage of whose after history we must say a few words. Captain Deciduous Barecolt continued to serve the king as long as any services could be available, and in no point or particular did he derogate from his high-established character. He fought as well, he drank as deeply, he lied as vigorously as we have seen him do in the past narrative; and, though in the succeeding wars he got into a thousand scrapes, in which it required all the genius of a Barecolt to extricate his neck from the halter or his throat from the knife, he contrived, with marvellous ingenuity, to find his way out of circumstances which would have overwhelmed any common man. Nor was he absent from Worcester field; on the contrary, some have asserted that he was taken prisoner on that occasion, and contrived to deceive the keenness of Cromwell himself. Certain it is that after the restoration of Charles II. Barecolt returned to England, presented himself at Bishop's Merton, put in a claim to the property of Mr. Dry of Longsoaken, as the direct heir of old Nicholas Cobalter, and, having proved that the will under which Mrs. Cobalter had possessed his uncle's property was a forgery, he established such a debt against the estate of Mr. Dry as speedily rendered him the master of Longsoaken. There he continued to reside with an elderly man named Falgate, who played the character, partly of dependant, partly of attached friend, till he had well-nigh reached the age of eighty years, when, with a form somewhat bowed, a face somewhat white, and a nose which had gradually turned from red to blue, Colonel Barecolt of Longsoaken sank quietly into the grave, his last words being, "The pottle-pot's empty, Diggory."



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